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Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships

Part III

JANUARY-JULY 1965

PREPARED FOR THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

BY THE

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE,
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Washington, DC, August 15, 1988.

Hon. CLAIBORNE PELL,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: In response to the request of the Committee on Foreign Relations for an extensive analysis of the role in the Vietnam war of the Committee, the Senate, and the Congress, and of the major decisions made by the Executive, as well as of the relations between the two branches, I am pleased to submit the third part of that study by the Service, entitled, "The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, Part III, January–July, 1965.

The author of the study is William Conrad Gibbons, Specialist in U.S. Foreign Policy, of our Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division.

Sincerely,

JOSEPH E. ROSS, *Director.*

FOREWORD

This volume, which is part of an overall study of the U.S. Government and the Vietnam war from 1945–1975 being prepared for the Committee on Foreign Relations, describes events during the fateful period from January through July 1965 as decisions were made to use American forces to fight in Vietnam.

By January 1965, the situation in South Vietnam had worsened, and President Lyndon B. Johnson was being advised to take stronger action. In Congress, there was general support for the President's policy, but uncertainty as to what should be done. Several members of the Committee on Foreign Relations were opposed to military escalation and wanted the administration to consult with the committee before taking further action. The reply of Secretary of State Dean Rusk was that he would report this concern to the President.

In early February, the Communists attacked an American base at Pleiku, and the President, after conferring with his advisers and with top congressional leaders, decided to begin bombing North Vietnam. There was little open opposition in Congress to this action, or to the deployment to Vietnam in early March of the first American combat forces.

During the spring of 1965, as Congress was preoccupied with a very heavy schedule of domestic legislation, the President, without consulting Congress, approved the deployment of additional forces and the general strengthening of the U.S. role in Vietnam. In late April, however, after a meeting of the President's advisers in Honolulu at which additional troop increases and other measures were agreed upon, there were signs of growing unrest in Congress, and renewed concern among some members of the Committee on Foreign Relations about the need for consultation by the Executive with the Congress before the U.S. became involved in a larger war. Once again, Secretary Rusk said he would report this to the President.

The President's reaction was to ask Congress on May 4 for a special appropriation to support U.S. efforts in Vietnam, saying that each Member who voted for the request would, at the same time, be approving U.S. policy in Vietnam, Although a number of members objected to that interpretation, the request came at a time when American troops were in the field, and the bill was passed with only a handful of dissenting votes.

By early June, the military situation in South Vietnam had deteriorated further, and Gen. William C. Westmoreland, Commander of U.S. forces in Vietnam, requested that U.S. troop strength be augmented and that American forces assume an active role in defending the country.

Westmoreland's request produced considerable alarm among Democrats and Republicans in Congress, but there was reluctance to oppose the President or to limit his foreign policy and military options, and as a result of this, together with the divisions of opinion in Congress with respect to the proper role for the United States in the war, there was no clear congressional consensus as to what should be done. Most members seemed fatalistic, feeling that the die was cast and that there was little hope of influencing the situation.

Although a small group of senior Senators, Democrats and Republicans, met privately on July 27 and agreed that the United States was probably making a mistake in getting further involved in Vietnam, they did not presume to propose an alternative. Later that day, the President told congressional leaders that he had approved Westmoreland's request for troops and that the U.S. was going to defend South Vietnam with its own forces.

The material and findings contained herein are the work of the Congressional Research Service, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Committee or its present or past members.

CLAIBORNE PELL,
Chairman, Committee on Foreign Relations.

PREFACE

This is the third part of *The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War,* a study of policymaking during the 30 years of the war, 1945-1975. Parts I and II covered the period between 1945 and 1960 and between 1961 and 1964. Part III, after a brief recapitulation of developments during 1964, covers the period from January through July 1965, from the beginning of U.S. bombing of North Vietnam in February through the early phases of U.S. combat troop deployments to the announcement by the President on July 28 that he had approved the deployment of additional combat forces, and that others would be sent "as requested." "We did not choose to be the guardians at the gate," he said, "but there is no one else. . . . We will stand in Vietnam."

As stated in the prefaces to parts I and II, this study does not seek to judge or to assess responsibility, but it does attempt to locate responsibility, to describe roles, and to indicate why and how decisions were made. It is nonpolitical and nonpartisan, as all products of the Congressional Research Service (CRS) are required to be. Occasional references in the text to "liberal" or "moderate" or "conservative," as well as to "internationalist" or "nationalist," "interventionist" or "noninterventionist," or the use of such adjectives as "influential" or "powerful," are intended to be guides to understanding rather than political labels.

CRS and the author would like to thank the Chairman, Senator Claiborne Pell, and the members of the Committee on Foreign Relations for their continued support of this project, as well as Geryld B. Christianson, Staff Director, Uwe Timpke, Editor, and Leonard A. Bauroth, Assistant to the Editor. At the Government Printing Office, James H. Byers, Supervisory Printing Specialist and Chief, In-House Production has again been very helpful.

The author also appreciates the encouragement and help of Dr. Richard A. Baker, Senate Historian, and Dr. Donald A. Ritchie, Associate Historian and editor of the historical series of executive session hearings of the Committee on Foreign Relations. Among its other valuable contributions, the Senate Historical Office is preparing oral histories of Members and staff of the Senate, some of which provide a useful source of information on the role of the Senate and its Members in connection with the Vietnam war.

This volume, like parts I and II, has been reviewed (in early draft) by several persons who were actively involved in Vietnam policymaking in the Executive or Congress: from the Executive, William P. Bundy, who served in the CIA in the 1950s and was then Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and later Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs in the Johnson administration, after which he was editor of *Foreign Affairs* for 12 years; U. Alexis Johnson, a career Foreign Service officer who served in many positions in which he dealt with Southeast Asia, including the 1954 Geneva Conference, Under Secretary of State, Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam, and Ambassador to Thailand; Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster, (U.S.A., Ret.), who was on the Eisenhower White House staff, after which he was actively involved in Vietnam policymaking as Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and later Deputy Commander of U.S. Forces in Vietnam; Chester L. Cooper, who, as an employee of the CIA, was a member of the U.S. delegation to Geneva in 1954 as well as to the 1961-1962 Geneva Conference on Laos, after which he became the principal assistant for Asian affairs on the National Security Council staff, and, in 1966, Special Assistant for Vietnam Negotiations to Ambassador W. Averell Harriman; and, from the Congress, Norvill Jones, who served as legislative assistant to Senator J. William Fulbright, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, and then as a Professional Staff Member and later Chief of Staff of the Committee; and Boyd Crawford, Staff Administrator of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives during the entire 30 years of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war.

As he has in the past, William Bundy, with his commitment to high standards of scholarship and his concern for factual accuracy and fair and honest interpretation, has made a very important contribution to this volume.

In the Congressional Research Service, very helpful reviews were provided by Robert L. Goldich, a Specialist in National Defense who was the supervisor of this project during several years as a section head in the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division; Dr. Robert G. Sutter, an Asian specialist who formerly served in the CIA and is now the Chief of the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division; and, in the Office of the Director, Joan M. Davenport, Review Specialist, who studied Asian affairs and has lived in the region, and who combines knowledge and good judgment in reviewing material prior to its submission to Congress.

This volume has also benefitted from the generous collegial advice and assistance of Professor Fred I. Greenstein of Princeton University, whose seminal study (with John P. Burke) of Presidential decisionmaking on Vietnam in 1954 and 1965 will soon be published (see citation in chapter one below).

In addition, there has been a beneficial association with the project of Professors David Sylvan of the University of Minnesota and Stephen Majeski of the University of Washington to build computational models of recommendations about going to war, using U.S. policy towards Vietnam and Laos in 1961 and 1963-1965 as the data source.

The author also wishes to express his appreciation to the many persons who have provided for the continued support of this project and the research activities involved. In CRS, special thanks are due the Director, Joseph E. Ross, the Assistant Director, William H. Robinson, and the former and present chiefs of the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division—Dr. Sutter, the present chief, and Dr. Stanley J. Heginbotham, the former chief, who is now the Deputy Director, International Affairs Program, the Ford Foundation. Also helpful were Susan C. Finsen, Assistant Director for Operations; James S. Richardson, Assistant Executive Officer; and in the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, Charlotte P. Preece, Assistant Chief. Graphics were coordinated by Jeanne Hamilton, CRS Review Specialist, and produced by Andy Hemstreet, Graphics Designer at Art Services Inc. in Washington, D.C. Contract arrangements were handled by Edgar Glick. Other administrative services were provided by Lynn T. Gore, Administrative Team Leader. Travel to the Lyndon Johnson Library was assisted by William L. Richardson, a CRS Administrative Officer. Security clearances required for access to classified files were processed by Bessie E H Alkisswani, CRS Administrative Team Leader, and by Cynthia A. Wilkins, Personnel Security Officer in the Library of Congress. Research materials were provided by Charles W. Woodland, Information Analyst, and Carolyn L. Hatcher, Technical Information Specialist, in the Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division. Leneice Wu, Coordinator of Division Research, and Kenneth Cockrell, Information Resources Assistant, helped in securing publications.

CRS and the author also wish to acknowledge the vital contribution to this project which is being made by George Mason University, where the author is a Visiting Research Professor, and to thank the following individuals: Dr. Harold F. Gortner, the very able and cooperative Chair of the Public Affairs Department, and Virginia V. McCaslin, Secretary; Dr. Paula R. Lewis, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; Michael T. Fish, Director, Office for Research; Dr. Frederick H. Siff, Vice President for Computer and Information Systems, as well as Joseph W. Hutchison, Senior Engineer in Computing Systems & Operations; and in Office Support Services, the excellent Coordinator, Mary F. Blackwell. In addition, Professors John Cole and Nguyen Manh Hung (who is also Director of the Indochina Center at GMU) of the Public Affairs Department have been very encouraging and supportive.

Above all, the author wishes to express once again his deep appreciation to his dedicated assistant, Anne G. Bonanno, an Information Specialist in Office Support Services, for her indispensable contribution to this project. With unfailing cheerfulness, she continues to express her commitment by working as long and as hard as it takes to make a book out of a mass of handwritten yellow sheets while performing the many additional tasks required by a project of this size and scope.

The success of this project also depends upon the cooperation of a number of persons involved in the preservation and use of government records. At the Department of State, where the author spent many hours examining classified materials, Charles N. Mills, Chief of the Research Branch of the Foreign Affairs Information Management Center, and Tomislav H. Landikusic, Research Specialist, were very cooperative in efforts to locate and use relevant documents, and to send designated items for declassification review under the Freedom of Information Act. Others who were helpful included those former Foreign Service officers who reviewed the material (but who, understandably, prefer anonymity) and the staff who processed the hundreds of documents which the author had requested be declassified. Presiding over the entire operation was an experienced Foreign Service officer, Ambassador John R. Burke, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, now retired, whose tours of duty included Vietnam. Kenneth A. Hartung, another experienced former Foreign Service officer, has been helpful while serving as Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary.

In addition, valuable assistance has again been rendered by Dr. John P. Glennon, editor-in-chief of the State Department's *Foreign Relations* series.

At the Defense Department, W. M. McDonald, Director, Freedom of Information and Security Review, was very helpful in processing Freedom of Information Act requests for declassification.

At the U.S. Army's Center of Military History in Washington, historian Vincent H. Demma provided considerable assistance with the use of documents in the Center's collection, and, with his customary resourcefulness and goodwill, helped the author find answers to a number of questions. Hannah Zeidlik, Chief of the Historical Resources Branch, was helpful in arranging for access to classified military records. Ted Ballard, Archivist-Historian, assisted with access to the papers of Gen. William C. Westmoreland. The declassification of important Army documents was skillfully performed by Wanda Ratcliffe.

At the National Records Center of the National Archives, Henry D. Mayer, Assistant Chief of the Military Field Branch, assisted with access to other Army records.

At the U.S. Army's Military History Institute at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, the Director, Col. Rod Paschall, David A. Keough, Assistant Archivist/Historian, and Randy Rakers, Security Manager, were very helpful in making available information from that important archival source.

Clearance of manuscript pages containing quoted material from classified documents from the collection of the Center of Military History was done with dispatch by Patricia E. Skinner, Review Officer in the Office of Public Affairs of the Army.

At the Library of the National Defense University, Susan Lemke, Chief of Special Collections, and Tina Lavato, Library Technician, were helpful in the use of the Maxwell Taylor papers.

The most important source of materials used in this volume has been the papers in the Lyndon B. Johnson Library in Austin, Texas, where a small staff handles with skill and tact an enormous and complicated workload of requests. CRS and the author wish to express deepest appreciation to the Director, Harry Middleton, the Supervisory Archivist, Tina Houston, the Senior Archivist, Dr. David Humphrey, and Archivists Nancy Smith, Linda Hansen and Regina Greenwell, for their contribution to this study. David Humphrey, who handles most of the Vietnam requests, deserves special recognition and thanks for providing such excellent and friendly assistance. Those who are studying the Vietnam war would be lost without his help.

Finally, CRS and the author wish to thank the Princeton University Press, especially the Editor, Sanford Thatcher, for publishing this series of volumes subsequent to original publication by the U.S. Government Printing Office, thus broadening the circulation of the work commissioned by the Committee on Foreign Relations and increasing the Committee's service to the furtherance of public knowledge.

None of those cited above, nor any one else connected with the project outside of CRS, bears any responsibility for the facts and views presented herein, which are the final responsibility of the author and CRS.

Note:

In part I of this study, p. 313, footnote 89, Professor Robert Scigliano was erroneously identified as the author of an article in the December 11, 1966, *New York Times Magazine,* "We Cannot Accept a Communist Seizure of Vietnam" (the author of which was Professor Robert Scalipino), and it was also incorrectly stated that Professor Scigliano was a leader in the defense of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war in the 1960s by the Michigan State University group.

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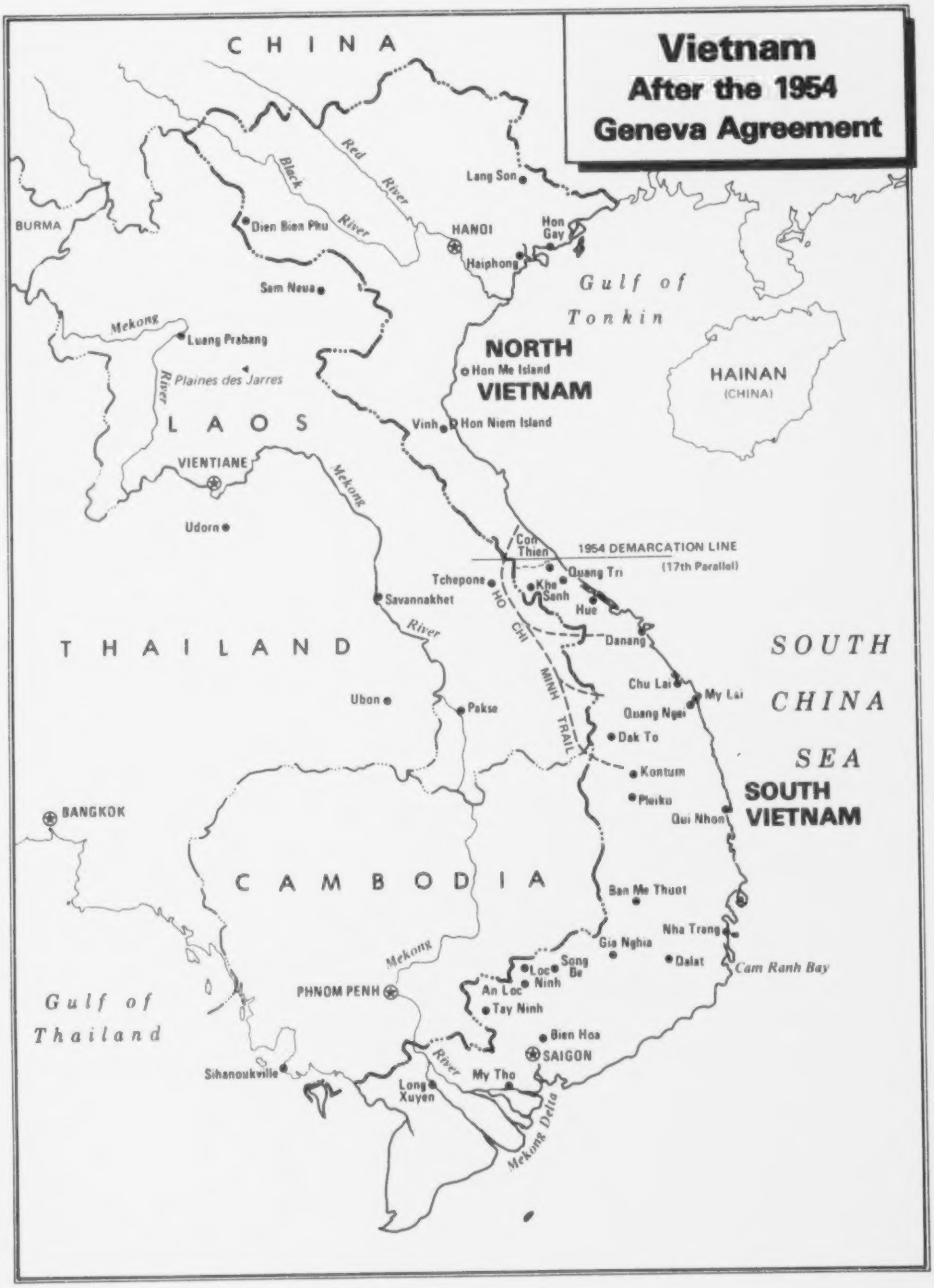


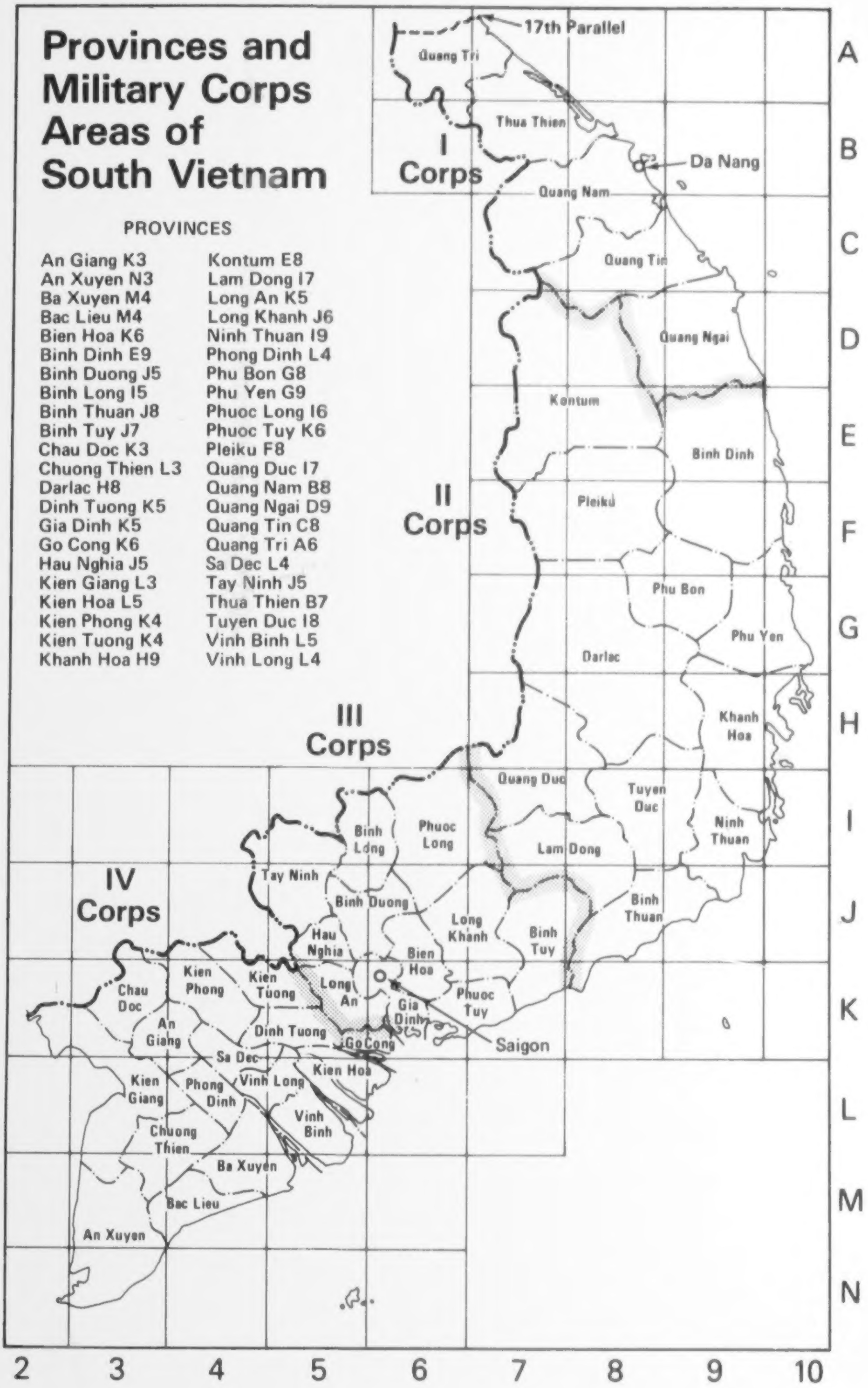
Vietnam After the 1954 Geneva Agreement

CHINA
Red River
Black River
Lang Son
BURMA
Dien Bien Phu
HANOI
Hon Gay
Haiphong
Gulf of Tonkin
Sam Neua
Mekong
Luang Prabang
NORTH VIETNAM
Hon Me Island
River
Plaines des Jarres
HAINAN (CHINA)
LAOS
Vinh
Hon Niem Island
VIENTIANE
Mekong
Udorn
Con Thien
1954 DEMARCATION LINE (17th Parallel)
Quang Tri
Tchepone
Khe Sanh
Hue
HO CHI MINH TRAIL
Savannakhet
River
Danang
THAILAND
SOUTH CHINA SEA
Chu Lai
My Lai
Ubon
Pakse
Quang Ngai
Dak To
Kontum
Pleiku
BANGKOK
SOUTH VIETNAM
Qui Nhon
CAMBODIA
Ban Me Thuot
Nha Trang
Gia Nghia
Dalat
Mekong
Loc Ninh
Song Be
Cam Ranh Bay
PHNOM PENH
An Loc
Tay Ninh
Gulf of Thailand
Bien Hoa
SAIGON
Sihanoukville
River
My Tho
Long Xuyen
Mekong Delta

Provinces and Military Corps Areas of South Vietnam

PROVINCES

An Giang K3
An Xuyen N3
Ba Xuyen M4
Bac Lieu M4
Bien Hoa K6
Binh Dinh E9
Binh Duong J5
Binh Long I5
Binh Thuan J8
Binh Tuy J7
Chau Doc K3
Chuong Thien L3
Darlac H8
Dinh Tuong K5
Gia Dinh K5
Go Cong K6
Hau Nghia J5
Kien Giang L3
Kien Hoa L5
Kien Phong K4
Kien Tuong K4
Khanh Hoa H9
Kontum E8
Lam Dong I7
Long An K5
Long Khanh J6
Ninh Thuan I9
Phong Dinh L4
Phu Bon G8
Phu Yen G9
Phuoc Long I6
Phuoc Tuy K6
Pleiku F8
Quang Duc I7
Quang Nam B8
Quang Ngai D9
Quang Tin C8
Quang Tri A6
Sa Dec L4
Tay Ninh J5
Thua Thien B7
Tuyen Duc I8
Vinh Binh L5
Vinh Long L4


17th Parallel
Quang Tri
Thua Thien
I Corps
Da Nang
Quang Nam
Quang Tin
Quang Ngai
Kontum
Binh Dinh
II Corps
Pleiku
Phu Bon
Phu Yen
Darlac
Khanh Hoa
III Corps
Quang Duc
Tuyen Duc
Ninh Thuan
Binh Long
Phuoc Long
Lam Dong
Tay Ninh
IV Corps
Binh Duong
Long Khanh
Binh Tuy
Binh Thuan
Hau Nghia
Bien Hoa
Kien Phong
Kien Tuong
Long An
Chau Doc
Gia Dinh
Phuoc Tuy
An Giang
Dinh Tuong
Go Cong
Saigon
Sa Dec
Kien Hoa
Kien Giang
Phong Dinh
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Vinh Binh
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: 1964, PROLOGUE TO WAR

On November 3, 1963, the Premier of South Vietnam, Ngo Dinh Diem, was assassinated in a coup which had been fully encouraged and supported by the United States.[1] A military junta, the Military Revolutionary Council, headed by Gen. Duong Van Minh, assumed power and appointed Diem's Vice Premier, Nguyen Ngoc Tho, as Premier.

On November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated and was succeeded by Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson. In a meeting on Sunday, November 24, with Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam Henry Cabot Lodge, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Director John A. McCone, Under Secretary of State George W. Ball, and Presidential Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy, President Johnson was told by Lodge that the change in the South Vietnamese Government had been an improvement, and "he thought by February or March [1964] we would see marked progress."[2] McCone said, however, that the CIA's estimate of the situation was "somewhat more serious," and he could not give a "particularly optimistic appraisal of the future."

President Johnson said he "approached the situation with some misgivings." He noted that many people had questioned the overthrow of Diem (Johnson himself had been strongly opposed to the U.S. decision to support a coup) and that "strong voices in Congress felt we should get out of Vietnam." But the coup was over, and "we have to see that our objectives are accomplished."

---

[1] For a more detailed discussion of 1963-1964, see pt. II of this study. For significant works published since the publication of pt. II, see Ellen J. Hammer, *A Death in November: America in Vietnam, 1963* (New York: Dutton, 1987); George McT. Kahin, *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986); Bui Diem, *In the Jaws of History* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1987); Thomas J. Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War: Dean Rusk in the Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson Years* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); Larry Berman, *The Planning of a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983).

See also the excellent forthcoming study by John P. Burke and Fred I. Greenstein, with the collaboration of Larry Berman and Richard Immerman, comparing and contrasting the handling of Vietnam in 1954 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower and in 1965 by President Lyndon B. Johnson: *The Quality of Presidential Decision Making: The Use of Advice and Information in Two Vietnam Crises* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1989).

Two volumes of R. B. Smith's pioneering study of the war from an international perspective have been published: *An International History of the Vietnam War,* vol. 1: *Revolution versus Containment, 1955-61* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), and vol. 2: *The Kennedy Strategy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985).

Also useful is Neil Sheehan's, *A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam* (New York: Random House, 1988).

[2] Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File, "Memorandum for the Record, Subject: South Vietnam Situation," Nov. 25, 1963. This memorandum, the only known notes of the meeting on November 24, was prepared by the Director of Central Intelligence, John McCone, and was declassified in 1985, subsequent to publication of pt. II of this study.

McNamara said he had examined the economic situation and he felt that the U.S. should "give generously of economic aid," but "must not ask the South Vietnamese government to do the impossible at this particular time." The President said he supported McNamara's position, "but at the same time he wanted to make it abundantly clear that he did not think we had to reform every Asian into our own image. . . . He was anxious to get along, win the war—he didn't want as much effort placed on so-called social reforms."

"I received in this meeting the first 'President Johnson tone' for action as contrasted with the 'Kennedy tone,' " McCone observed in notes which he took at the meeting. "Johnson definitely feels that we place too much emphasis on social reforms; he has very little tolerance with our spending so much time being 'do-gooders'. . . ." [3]

Some years later, Presidential Special Assistant Bill D. Moyers recounted his conversation with the President after the meeting: [4]

> Nov. 24, 1963. Lyndon Baines Johnson has been President barely two days. This Sunday afternoon he has spent with his national-security advisers, being briefed on South Vietnam by the United States ambassador to Saigon, Henry Cabot Lodge. Now the meetings are over, and the President, alone with an aide, is tilted back in the big chair behind the desk in the office he occupied for three years as Vice President. His feet are propped on the wastebasket and he is clinking the ice cubes in a pale-colored glass.
>
> "What did Lodge say?" the aide asks.
>
> "He says it's going to be hell in a handbasket out there."
>
> "What's happening?"
>
> "He says the army won't fight. Says the people don't know whose side to be on. If we don't do something, he says, it'll go under—any day."
>
> "So?"
>
> The President stares at his glass. "So they'll think with Kennedy dead we've lost heart. So they'll think we're yellow and don't mean what we say."
>
> "Who?"
>
> "The Chinese. The fellas in the Kremlin. They'll be taking the measure of us. They'll be wondering just how far they can go."
>
> "What are you going to do."
>
> "I'm going to give those fellas out there the money they want. This crowd today says a hundred or so million will make the difference."
>
> "What did you say?"
>
> "I told them they got it—more if they need it. I told them I'm not going to let Vietnam go the way of China. I told them to go back and tell those generals in Saigon that Lyndon Johnson intends to stand by our word, but by God, I want something for my money. I want 'em to get off their butts and get

---

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] Bill Moyers, "Flashbacks," *Newsweek*, Feb. 10, 1975. In Moyers' account, as can be seen, Lodge is quoted as being much more pessimistic than in McCone's account.

out in those jungles and whip hell out of some Communists. And then I want 'em to leave me alone, because I've got some bigger things to do right here at home."

"I hope they will," the aide replies.

The President swivels back and forth in the chair, silent again. He is looking at the far corner of the high ceiling. Finally, he answers, "So do I. But right now I feel like one of those catfish down in your and Lady Bird's country—down there around the old Taylor store."

"How's that?"

"I feel like I just grabbed a big juicy worm with a right sharp hook in the middle of it. . . ."

On November 26, 1963, President Johnson reaffirmed U.S. policy toward South Vietnam by approving National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 273, which stated in part: "It remains the central object of the United States in Vietnam to assist the people and Government of that country to win their contest against the externally directed and supported Communist conspiracy." [5]

In mid-December, McNamara and McCone, along with William P. Bundy, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, William E. Colby, former CIA Station Chief in Saigon who was then Chief of the Far East Division in the CIA's Directorate of Plans (covert operations),[6] and Gen. Victor H. Krulak, Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Special Assistant for Counterinsurgency, went to Vietnam for a brief review of the situation. In a cable to Lodge, McNamara stressed the importance of receiving promptly from the country team (consisting of Lodge and the other top U.S. civilian and military officials in Saigon) their plans and recommendations for increased efforts to win the war, especially covert operations against North Vietnam by South Vietnamese forces in which U.S. forces would be used "as is necessary." "Plans for such operations," McNamara told Lodge, "should include varying levels of pressure all designed to make clear to the North Vietnamese *that the US will not accept a Communist victory in South Vietnam and that we will escalate the conflict to whatever level is required to insure their defeat.*" [7] (emphasis added)

In his report to the President on December 21, McNamara said, "The situation is very disturbing. Current trends, unless reversed in the next 2-3 months, will lead to neutralization at best and most likely to a Communist-controlled state." [8]

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[5] Johnson Library, NSF National Security Action Memorandums. By approving NSAM 273, Johnson confirmed and continued the position taken by Presidents Harry S Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy, that the U.S. should seek to prevent Communist control of Vietnam. For Truman's position, see the National Security Council (NSC) policy paper approved on Apr. 24, 1950: NSC 64, "The Position of the United States With Respect to Indochina," and NSC 124, "United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Southeast Asia," June 25, 1952. For Eisenhower's position, see NSC 5405, Jan. 16, 1954, with the same title as NSC 124, and NSC 5429, "Review of U.S. Policy in the Far East," Aug. 12, 1954. For Kennedy's position, see the NSC policy paper—which beginning with Kennedy was called National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM)—NSAM 52, "Report of the Vietnam Task Force," May 11, 1961. All of these are discussed in pts. I and II of this study.

[6] In 1973, the Directorate of Plans, which was also referred to as the Clandestine Service, became the Directorate of Operations.

[7] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, McNamara to Lodge, DIASO-3 4783-63, Dec. 12, 1963.

[8] The text of the report is in the *Pentagon Papers*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 494-496 (hereafter cited as *PP*). This edition of the *Pentagon Papers* was published in 1971 in four volumes by the Beacon Press of Boston, based on material made available by Senator Mike Gravel (D/Alaska).

At a meeting that day with McNamara, the President approved the recommendations in the report, and General Krulak was made chairman of an interdepartmental committee to draw up plans for covert operations against North Vietnam.

In early January 1964, President Johnson approved the new covert operations plan, OPLAN 34-A, which by the use of "progressively escalating pressure," would seek "to inflict increasing punishment upon North Vietnam and to create pressures, which may convince the North Vietnamese leadership, in its own self-interest, to desist from its aggressive policies." [9]

In late January 1964, there was a coup within the military junta, and Gen. Nguyen Khanh became Premier. Gen. Duong Van Minh became the figurehead Chief of State.

The worst fears of those who had opposed the coup against Diem were apparently being realized as the Communists, aided by the unstable political situation, were moving rapidly to strengthen their hold on the countryside. After a survey by a high-level team, the CIA reported in early February 1964 that the situation was, ". . . very serious and prospects uncertain. Even with U.S. assistance as it is now, we believe that, unless there is marked improvement in the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese government and armed forces, South Vietnam has, at best, an even chance of withstanding the insurgency menace during the next few weeks or months." [10]

Some U.S. officials, concerned that the U.S. would become more involved, and that this could lead to costly and ineffective military intervention, took the position that it was up to the South Vietnamese to win the war and that the U.S. should avoid assuming further responsibility. One of these was Senator Richard B. Russell (D/Ga.), the powerful, highly-respected chairman of the Armed Services Committee, who had been Lyndon Johnson's mentor in the Senate. Russell, an opponent of U.S. involvement in Vietnam in the early 1950s, is reported to have told Johnson in late 1963, when the President asked him what he would do about Vietnam: "I'd spend whatever it takes to bring to power a government that would ask us to go home." [11]

Another was Senator Mike Mansfield (D/Mont.), the majority leader of the Senate (and former Senate majority whip when Lyndon Johnson was majority leader), a senior member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee known for his knowledge and long experience with respect to Asia. In memoranda to the President on December 7, 1963 and January 7, 1964, Mansfield urged a "diplomatic offensive," with the help of the French, to reduce the conflict between South and North Vietnam "on terms which reduced our influence (and costs) *provided* it also inhibited Chinese political domination." [12] (emphasis in original) He said that Cambodia, which considered itself neutral, was the "principal prototype of any eventual peace for Southeast Asia." The goal, he said, should be an "independent Southeast Asia, not dependent on a costly U.S. prop."

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[9] *Ibid.*, p. 151.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

[11] Quoted by Tom Wicker, *New York Times*, May 1, 1966.

[12] Mansfield's memoranda of Dec. 7, 1963 and Jan. 7, 1964 are in the Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

Rusk, the President's principal foreign affairs adviser, as well as McNamara and McGeorge Bundy, disagreed with Mansfield's position.[13] Rusk called the proposal for neutralization "a phony," which would lead to a Communist takeover. Moreover, there could be a diplomatic settlement, he added, "only after the North Vietnamese become convinced that they cannot destroy the Republic of Vietnam by guerrilla warfare." McNamara and Bundy agreed that neutralization would lead to Communist control, which in turn would seriously affect the rest of Southeast Asia and the U.S. position in Asia and the world. McNamara said that "the stakes in preserving an anti-Communist South Vietnam are so high that . . . we must go on bending every effort to win." Bundy said, "If we neutralize, it should not be because *we* have quit but because *others* have." "The right course," he added, "is to continue to strengthen our struggle against the Communist terror. . . ." (emphasis in original)

Although there is no record as to whether or what the President replied to Mansfield, he apparently agreed with his advisers (or they with him), and in a conversation with Mansfield's assistant he said, referring to the conquest of China by the Communists (which many Republicans had blamed on the Democrats), ". . . we do not want another China in Vietnam." [14]

On January 31, 1964, the day after the Khanh coup, President Charles de Gaulle of France again proposed a unified, independent Vietnam, and President Johnson replied that neutralization did not appear likely, and that the course the U.S. was following was "the only course for us to follow. . . . We plan to pursue it diligently and, we hope, successfully on a stepped-up basis." [15]

Stepping up U.S. actions in the war was, indeed, what the President was considering. The military, as Gen. Maxwell D. Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said in an important JCS memorandum on January 22, 1964, were urging "bolder actions which may embody greater risks." [16] Arguing that the key to controlling the insurgency in the South was to stop its support by North Vietnam, the Chiefs proposed using South Vietnamese forces, as well as U.S. forces as necessary, in attacks on the North: bombardment by air, mining of harbors, commando raids against critical targets, and ground attacks across the Laotian border on the Communist supply line through Laos—the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They also proposed that the South Vietnamese should let the U.S. assume tactical direction of the war in the South, and that the U.S. commander should have full responsibility for all South Vietnamese and U.S. operations against the North.

Walt W. Rostow, Director of the Policy Planning Council of the Department of State, who during the early Kennedy period had been heavily involved in Vietnamese matters while serving as a deputy to McGeorge Bundy and was an active proponent of a stronger U.S. role in Vietnam, also argued for bolder action in a memorandum to Secretary of State Rusk on February 13, 1964.[17]

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[13] The memoranda from Rusk, McNamara and Bundy, which were sent to the President by Bundy on Jan. 9, 1964, are in the Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[14] Quoted in Mansfield's memorandum to the President, Jan. 7, 1964.

[15] For further comments on de Gaulle's proposal, see pt. II of this study, pp. 219-223.

[16] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 496-499.

On February 18, 1964, the President directed that planning for additional actions in Vietnam should be stepped up, and that, "Particular attention should be given to shaping such pressures so as to produce the maximum credible deterrent effect on Hanoi." [18] The result was a report from a State Department study group led by Robert H. Johnson, Rostow's deputy in Policy Planning (who, like Rostow, was also a former Kennedy NSC staff member working on Vietnam), under the general auspices of the newly-established interdepartmental Vietnam Coordinating Committee chaired by William H. Sullivan, a veteran Foreign Service officer with extensive experience in dealing with Vietnam. Basing its analysis on the strategic concept that the North Vietnamese would be concerned about destruction of their industrial achievements, as well as about whether possible Chinese help could lead to Chinese control, the study group said that there were five objectives of "measured pressure" against North Vietnam: "(1) induce North Vietnam to curtail its support of the Viet Cong in South Vietnam; (2) reduce the morale of the Viet Cong; (3) stiffen the Khanh government and discourage moves toward neutralism; (4) show the world that we will take strong measures to prevent the spread of communism; and (5) strengthen morale in Asia." [19] In addition, pressure on the North could improve the U.S. negotiating position. And negotiations, the report said, were "virtually inevitable."

In terms of directly affecting the situation in South Vietnam, however, the report took the position that pressure on the North would be "no substitute for counterinsurgency in South Vietnam":

> It is not likely that North Vietnam would (if it could) call off the war in the South even though U.S. actions would in time have serious economic and political impact. Overt action against North Vietnam would be unlikely to produce reduction in Viet Cong activity sufficiently to make victory on the ground possible in South Vietnam unless accompanied by new U.S. bolstering actions in South Vietnam and considerable improvement in the government there. The most to be expected would be reduction of North Vietnamese support of the Viet Cong for a while and, thus, the gaining of some time and opportunity by the government of South Vietnam to improve itself.

NSAM 288

In mid-March 1964, President Johnson again sent McNamara, accompanied by McCone and JCS Chairman Taylor, to Vietnam for a report on the situation. On March 17 he endorsed their report and directed that its text should become NSAM 288. This document, which became the basic policy guideline for subsequent Vietnam decisions of the Johnson administration, declared that the U.S. objective was "an independent, non-Communist South Vietnam."[20] Failure to achieve that objective could have serious repercussions in Asia:

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[17] For further details, see pt. II of this study, p. 231.

[18] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 154.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 155. The report, "Alternatives for Imposition of Measured Pressure Against North Vietnam," is discussed in pt. II of this study, pp. 235-236. See also the article by the study group's coordinator, Robert Johnson, "Escalation Then and Now," *Foreign Policy* 60 (Fall 1985), pp. 130-147.

> Unless we can achieve this objective in South Vietnam, almost all of Southeast Asia will probably fall under Communist dominance (all of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia), accommodate to Communism so as to remove effective U.S. and anti-Communist influence (Burma), or fall under the domination of forces not now explicitly Communist but likely then to become so (Indonesia taking over Malaysia). Thailand might hold for a period with our help, but would be under grave pressure. Even the Philippines would become shaky, and the threat to India to the west, Australia and New Zealand to the south, and Taiwan, Korea, and Japan to the north and east would be greatly increased.

Moreover, failure to prevent Communist control of South Vietnam could have broader repercussions for U.S. security interests, especially the reputation of the United States as a guarantor against Communist invasion or subversion of other countries. Following the position taken by the Kennedy administration, the NSAM stated that "the South Vietnam conflict is regarded as a test case of U.S. capacity to help a nation meet a Communist 'war of liberation.' "

On April 17, 1964, pursuant to NSAM 288, the Joint Chiefs of Staff proposed a three-phase plan of military action for applying graduated pressure on North Vietnam: (1) air and ground strikes against targets in South Vietnam, and hot pursuit into Laotian and Cambodian border areas; (2) "tit-for-tat" airstrikes, airborne and amphibious raids, and aerial mining operations against targets in North Vietnam; and, (3) increasingly severe airstrikes and other operations against North Vietnam.[21]

This JCS plan, OPLAN 37-64, which included a list of 94 key bombing targets in North Vietnam (the "94 target list"), served as the blueprint for the U.S. air war against North Vietnam beginning in 1965.

In May 1964, as the military situation in South Vietnam and in Laos was considered to be growing more serious, and Premier Khanh was advocating "going north," President Johnson asked his advisers to prepare two action plans, one military and the other political. On May 25, McGeorge Bundy sent him a draft memorandum, "Basic Recommendations and Projected Course of Action on Southeast Asia," which Bundy said represented his understanding of the thinking of Rusk and McNamara. The memorandum recommended U.S. action against North Vietnam if other measures failed:[22]

> It is recommended that you make a Presidential decision that the U.S. will use selected and carefully graduated military force against North Vietnam, under the following conditions: (1) after appropriate diplomatic and political warning and preparations, (2) and unless such warning and preparations—

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[20] For the text of NSAM 288, see *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 499-510.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 287.

[22] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

> in combination with other efforts—should produce a sufficient improvement of non-Communist prospects in South Vietnam and Laos to make military action against North Vietnam unnecessary.

The use of military force by the United States would be based on the following premises:

> (1) that the U.S. cannot tolerate the loss of Southeast Asia to communism;
>
> (2) that without a decision to resort to military action if necessary, the present prospect is not hopeful, in South Vietnam or in Laos;
>
> (3) that the decision to use force if necessary, backed by resolute and extensive deployment, and conveyed by every possible means to our adversaries, gives the best chance of avoiding the actual use of such force.

Force was not to be used "as an end in itself," however, but as a way of threatening the North Vietnamese and thereby persuading them to cease their support of Communist insurgencies in South Vietnam and Laos. "We intend that Communism shall not take over Southeast Asia, but we do not intend or desire the destruction of the Hanoi regime. If terror and subversion end, major improvement in relations is possible. It is only if they do not end that trouble is coming."

The memorandum proposed that after taking certain preliminary steps at the United Nations and with other members of the Southeast Asia Treaty, the U.S., joined by such allies as would participate, should deploy its forces in South Vietnam—"on a very large scale . . . so as to maximize their deterrent impact and their menace"—after which a supporting resolution would be sought from Congress, followed by further deployments and an initial airstrike against North Vietnam "designed to have more deterrent than destructive impact." At the same time, U.S. dependents would be withdrawn from South Vietnam and there would be "active diplomatic offensives" in the U.N. and/or a Geneva conference "aimed at restoring the peace throughout the area."

McGeorge Bundy's memorandum also discussed the risks involved:

> It is the hope and best estimate of most of your advisers that a decision of this kind can be executed without bringing a major military reply from Red China, and still less from the Soviet Union. It is also the prevailing estimate that selective and carefully prepared military action against North Vietnam will not trigger acts of terror and military operations by the Viet Cong which would engulf the Khanh regime. *Nevertheless, it is recognized that in making this decision we must accept two risks:* (1) the risk of escalation toward major land war or the use of nuclear weapons; (2) the risk of a reply in South Vietnam itself which would lose that country to neutralism and so eventually to Communism. (emphasis in original)

At a meeting of U.S. civilian and military officials in Honolulu on June 1-3, 1964, to discuss these proposals, it was agreed, however, that military action against North Vietnam was not immediately necessary and that U.S. objectives and plans needed to be refined before such action was taken.[23] It was also agreed that Congress and the public were not yet prepared to support further U.S. involvement in the war, and that a campaign should be launched for the purpose of obtaining such support.

On June 3, President Johnson met with his advisers and approved the recommendations of the Honolulu meeting.[24]

During and after the Honolulu Conference there was discussion among the President's advisers of the need for a congressional resolution endorsing the President's position and supporting such military action as the President deemed necessary. By June 11, 1964, a resolution had been drafted, but on June 15 the advisers decided that a resolution was not necessary at that time, and that, "in the absence of a considered decision for a sustained course of action," it would be difficult to explain and defend such a proposal. President Johnson, preparing for his 1964 campaign against Senator Barry M. Goldwater (R/Ariz.), also did not want the war to interfere with his election. Thus, with the exception of additional limited political-military actions and the campaign to gain public and congressional support, further actions and decisions were deferred until after November.[25]

The South Vietnamese, however, were becoming impatient with the lack of U.S. action. During July, there was again talk in Saigon about "marching North," and on July 25 the new U.S. Ambassador, Gen. Maxwell Taylor, fearing that Nguyen Khanh might resign and that this could encourage neutralist tendencies, recommended joint (U.S.-South Vietnam) contingency planning for bombing North Vietnam. At about the same time, the JCS proposed airstrikes against targets in North Vietnam, including torpedo boat bases, by unmarked planes flown by non-American crews. (In June, Ambassador Lodge had also recommended attacking torpedo boat bases.)[26]

The Gulf of Tonkin Incidents

Meanwhile, covert military operations against North Vietnam continued under the OPLAN 34-A program approved by President Johnson in January 1964. One such operation involved attacks on the coast of North Vietnam by high-speed boats manned by commandos from South Vietnam and other countries who had been recruited and were supported and led by the CIA with assistance from the U.S. Navy. Another operation, the DE SOTO patrols, involved the use of U.S. destroyers equipped with special electronic gear which was manned by personnel from the National Security Agency (NSA, which intercepts, processes, analyzes and disseminates information derived from communications of other countries) to gather information on North Vietnam's radar and communications systems, as well as to conduct a "show of force" off the North

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[23] Ambassador Lodge favored bombing the North but was opposed to the use of U.S. ground forces in the South. In a letter to President Johnson on June 5, 1964, he said that this would be a "venture of unlimited possibilities which could put us onto a slope along which we slide into a bottomless pit." Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[24] For the Honolulu decisions see *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. II, pp. 323-325, and vol. III, pp. 171-176.

[25] For an explanation of these developments see pt. II of this study, pp. 266-274.

[26] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Gulf of Tonkin Attacks, Saigon to Washington 214, July 25, 1964; and the *Pentagon Papers as Published by the New York Times* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 258.

Vietnamese coast. As will be seen, these patrols were also viewed as a means by which to provoke the North Vietnamese to take actions to which the U.S. and South Vietnam could then react.

On July 30, 1964, there was a 34-A raid against the North Vietnamese coast. The next day, the U.S.S. *Maddox* began a DE SOTO patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin in the area near the raid. On August 2, the *Maddox* was attacked by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. In a meeting that day with Rusk, Ball, Cyrus Vance (Deputy Secretary of Defense), McGeorge Bundy, and Gen. Earle C. Wheeler, the Chairman of the JCS (replacing Taylor), the President ordered an augmented patrol, and the *Maddox* was joined by the U.S.S. *Turner Joy.* He also approved another previously scheduled 34-A raid against North Vietnam on the night of August 3.[27]

On August 4, the commander of the DE SOTO patrol reported that the ships were under attack but several hours later, while U.S. officials were preparing to retaliate, he expressed doubts that an attack had actually occurred. President Johnson, however, after assurances by military leaders and Secretary McNamara that an attack had occurred, ordered U.S. planes to retaliate against North Vietnam.[28] One of the principal targets was the torpedo boat bases

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[27] In a "Top Secret—No Other Distribution" memorandum to Rusk on Aug. 8, 1964, which was declassified in 1987 by the State Department at the author's request, Michael V. Forrestal (formerly on the NSC staff, who had moved to the State Department in 1964 to become head of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee) stated: "One thing that may be troubling you, as it has troubled me, is that some of us did not know that the OPLAN 34-A actions against the Vinh Son radar post and Ron on the night of August 3rd (about the same time as the second destroyer incident) had been authorized. I checked this on August 4th with Cy Vance and Mac Bundy, both of whom told me that these actions had been approved at the White House on the previous Sunday, August 2nd. The implication was that the [State] Department had acquiesced at that time." He added: "I think it is very important for the Department to review its own procedures for handling 303 Committee [see below] actions, so that somebody who is responsible for the area passes on all these activities just prior to an executive order. At present, many of these activities are planned weeks or even months in advance, and the opportunity for review in light of any changed political circumstances is not adequate." U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S. The 303 Committee of the NSC, which authorized U.S. covert operations in other countries, was composed of the Deputy Secretary of Defense (Vance), the Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (U. Alexis Johnson), the Deputy Director (Plans) of the CIA (Richard Helms), and the President's Special Assistant for National Security Affairs (McGeorge Bundy).

Note: In pt. II of this study, p. 286, it was stated that at a meeting of the President and his advisers on the afternoon of August 3, the 34-A operation scheduled for that night was discussed, as well as the addition of more targets for that operation, and that Rusk subsequently sent a cable to Taylor stating that more targets would be added. This is incorrect in part. The meeting took place from 6:25 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. (following, not prior to, as stated on p. 287 of pt. II, a briefing of Senate leaders which occurred at 3:00 p.m.), and by that time the 34-A raids on August 3 had already occurred (it was then 6:25 a.m. on August 4 in Saigon). The 34-A operations of August 3 were discussed at the meeting, but the discussion of additional targets, and Rusk's reference to this in his cable, had to do with future 34-A operations rather than those of August 3.

[28] These events are discussed at length in pt. II, ch. 5 of this study. New evidence made available in 1988 suggests that the President and his principal advisers recognized, at least as of August 4, that the North Vietnamese attacks on U.S. ships were caused by the 34-A raids, even though they may not have been a "sufficient cause" for those attacks. In handwritten notes by McGeorge Bundy on the luncheon of the President with Bundy, Rusk, and McNamara on August 4 (Johnson Library, McGeorge Bundy Papers)—the only notes which appear to have been taken at that meeting—Bundy states, without indicating who made the comment, "What *is* 34-A role in all this? *Must be cause;* no other is rational. But not a sufficient cause?" (emphasis in original)

Since pt. II of this study was published, the second volume in the U.S. Navy's history of the war has been published: Edward Marolda and Oscar P. Fitzgerald, *From Military Assistance to Combat, 1959-1965,* vol. II of *The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Gov. Print. Off. for the Naval Historical Center, Dept. of the Navy, 1986). This valuable work contains (pp. 394-453) a detailed discussion of the DE SOTO patrols and of the Gulf of Tonkin incidents of August 2 and 4, 1964. Based on the available evidence the authors, after a rather strained interpretation in which contrary evidence is only mentioned in passing, con-

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which both the JCS and Ambassador Lodge had recommended attacking.

The President also used the occasion to obtain the congressional resolution which had been discussed in June. In the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, passed by the House of Representatives 416-0 and by the Senate 89-2 (Senators Wayne Morse [D/Ore.] and Ernest Gruening [D/Alaska] voted no), Congress declared that "The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in Southeast Asia." The President was authorized "to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom." [29]

During August-September 1964, while President Johnson made the keeping of peace and avoidance of U.S. troop commitments to Vietnam central themes in his election campaign, his advisers continued to prepare for further use of force against North Vietnam. In mid-August, W.W. Rostow proposed, as he had on several previous occasions, a program of "limited, graduated military actions," reinforced by other forms of pressure, to force the North Vietnamese, out of self-interest, to withdraw their support of the insurgency in the South.[30]

On August 11, the State Department circulated a plan, "Next Course of Action in Southeast Asia," drafted by William Bundy, under which the U.S. would pursue a three-phase course of action:[31]

Phase One—Military Silence (through August)

Phase Two—Limited Pressure (September through December)

Phase Three—More Serious Pressures (January 1965 and following)

In Phase Two, the U.S. would continue tit-for-tat retaliation against the North, which could include bombing of POL (petroleum, oil, lubricants) sites and the mining of the harbor at Haiphong. DE SOTO patrols would continue, but Bundy said that, "Both for present purposes and to maintain the credibility of our account of the events of last week [during the Gulf of Tonkin debate], they *must* be clearly dissociated from 34-A operations both in fact and in physical appearance." (emphasis in original) Other actions would include limited cross-border bombing operations along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos by U.S. and/or South Vietnamese planes.

In Phase Three, the U.S. would attack infiltration routes and facilities in the southern part of North Vietnam and move northward, followed by attacks on military-related targets in the area around Hanoi and Haiphong.

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clude that there was an attack on August 4. They also assert (p. 435): ". . . American leaders did not seek to provoke a North Vietnamese reaction to secure a *casus belli*, as often has been alleged." Yet they have not fully examined the making of the decision to send the DE SOTO patrol and they offer no evidence to support this assertion.

[29] For a detailed discussion of the Gulf of Tonkin incidents and the resolution, see pt. II of this study, ch. 5.

[30] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. V, pp. 336-337. See also pt. II of this study, pp. 345-346.

[31] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 524-529.

Ambassador Taylor, who had cabled Washington on August 9 proposing that OPLAN 37-64 (the JCS plan of April 1964 for graduated military pressure against North Vietnam) should be implemented beginning January 1, 1965, agreed with Bundy, but said that the U.S. should proceed with caution "until we have a better feel of the quality of our ally [the Khanh government]." [32]

The JCS, as well as Adm. Ulysses S. Grant Sharp, Jr., Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC), who was in direct command of all U.S. forces in Vietnam, while generally agreeing with Bundy's proposal, recommended that the U.S. should establish a base at Danang, and should move more quickly and firmly to position its forces for undertaking major action against North Vietnam, beginning with the deployment of U.S. ground as well as additional air forces to provide for protection of U.S. units already stationed in South Vietnam.[33]

The JCS, in its response to State's memorandum, again emphasized their view that the U.S. should apply the force necessary to compel the North Vietnamese to cease supporting the insurgency in South Vietnam and in Laos. Stronger U.S. action against the North was "urgent," the Chiefs said. ". . . accelerated and forceful action with respect to North Vietnam is essential to prevent a complete collapse of the US position in Southeast Asia."

In the latter part of August 1964, there was a new political crisis in South Vietnam. At the time of the Gulf of Tonkin attack, Khanh had declared a state of emergency giving him virtually absolute power. On August 16, with the approval of the Military Revolutionary Council, he announced a new constitution (the Vung Tau Charter) by which he became President, replacing Chief of State Gen. Duong Van Minh. There was a strong reaction, especially from some of the military and from the Buddhists, and in late August Khanh withdrew the charter and acceded to a triumvirate consisting of himself, General Minh and Gen. Tran Thien Khiem which would rule until the council could form a new government. The general reaction in Washington as well as among U.S. officials in Saigon was that the United States might have to move more quickly and vigorously than the State Department had suggested in William Bundy's memorandum of August 11. In a memorandum on August 31, which he prepared for a meeting that day attended by Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, and others (the President did not attend), William Bundy felt, according to his own description several years later, "that by the end of the week it would be generally thought that the situation was desperate . . . [and] even if Khanh recovered, the situation would have been seriously weakened and the odds had become 'very great' that without some major new element the situation could simply come apart some time between now and November." [34] This memorandum, Bundy said, was his first expression of the possibility that the U.S. might "lose" in Vietnam, and that, in order to prepare to defend Thailand and other Asian countries, it "would be much stronger to go down with our guns firing."

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[32] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Gulf of Tonkin Attacks, Saigon to Washington 364, Aug. 9, 1964; and Saigon to Washington 465, Aug. 18, 1964, the text of which is in *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 545-548.

[33] For the views of CINCPAC and the JCS, see *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 542-545 and 550-552.

[34] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers), notes made by William Bundy in 1969 for preparation of a history of the war.

Bundy proposed that if a semblance of cohesion could be reestablished in South Vietnam, the U.S. might consider trying some 34-A actions and a DE SOTO patrol in a "defensible but challenging mode" to provoke the North Vietnamese to react, thus giving the U.S. an excuse for bombing the North again, and more strongly than before. If this produced greater cohesion in the South, the U.S. could then consider applying more systematic military pressure, against the North, possibly sooner than his August 11 memorandum had proposed, "but hopefully," he added, that decision would not have to be made "for a couple of months." [35]

There are apparently no notes of the meeting on August 31, but afterward a cable was sent to Saigon stating that, if possible, Khanh should be restored to power. The cable, according to William Bundy, did not reflect the "underlying gloom in my memo." [36] Apparently, Rusk and McNamara did not think the situation was so serious as to warrant the provocative actions suggested by Bundy.

In a memorandum to the President after the August 31 meeting, McGeorge Bundy said that there was some question as to Khanh's ability to control the situation, but that, "The larger question is whether there is any course of action that can improve the chances in this weakening situation." [37] Various measures were being discussed, but he thought that "before we let this country go" the U.S. should consider using its own forces against Communist insurgents in the South. He said he did not think the use of U.S. ground forces in South Vietnam would be a "repetition of Korea," and he told the President: "It seems to me at least possible that a couple of brigade-size units [an Army brigade is approximately 4,500] put in to do specific jobs about six weeks from now might be good medicine everywhere."

Another proponent of increased pressure on North Vietnam was John T. McNaughton, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (replacing William Bundy), who concluded in a memorandum in early September, "Plan of Action for South Vietnam," that the Government of South Vietnam was so weak that the U.S. could succeed only if it used its own ground combat forces in South Vietnam and took further action against the North.[38] He proposed that, beginning around October 1, the U.S. should seek "by doing legitimate things to provoke a DRV response and to be in a good position to seize on that response, or upon an unprovoked DRV action, to commence a crescendo of GVN-US military actions against the DRV."

On September 7, the JCS also called for provocative actions by the U.S. which could provide the basis for launching systematic air attacks on the North.[39]

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[35] Bundy's memorandum of Aug. 31, 1964 is also in Lot File 85 D 240.

[36] Same location, 1969 Bundy notes.

[37] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

[38] For the text of the second draft of McNaughton's memorandum, Sept. 3, 1964, see *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 556-559.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 193, from JCS "talking paper" for the Chairman of the JCS, "Next Courses of Action for RVN," Sept. 7, 1964.

On September 6, Ambassador Taylor cabled Washington that as a result of the political turmoil—Khanh had regained power on September 4, but the situation remained unstable—it was clear that "we now have a better feel for the quality of our ally." [40] (On August 18 he had taken the position that the U.S. should proceed with caution until it could get a "better feel.") "Recent events," he said, "have revealed the weakness of our ally. . . ." Rather than waiting for improvements in the Government of South Vietnam before taking stronger action against the North, he now thought that the U.S. should plan to begin its graduated pressure plan a month earlier (December 1) than he had recommended on August 9. To wait, he said, would be to risk further political turmoil and the development of a "popular front," which might have the effect of forcing the U.S. to withdraw from South Vietnam. If the U.S. were to "leave Vietnam with our tail between our legs, the consequences of this defeat in the rest of Asia, Africa, and Latin America would be disastrous."

On September 8, a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE), "Chances for a Stable Government in South Vietnam," concluded that, "At present the odds are against the emergence of a stable non-Communist regime in South Vietnam." [41]

On September 9, 1964, President Johnson took time from his political campaign to discuss with his advisers the uncertain situation in South Vietnam and the question of applying additional military pressures on North Vietnam. Prior to the meeting, the President received a memorandum drafted on September 8 by William Bundy and Michael V. Forrestal (head of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee) summarizing the view of Rusk, McNamara, Taylor, and General Wheeler, Chairman of the JCS, that the Government of South Vietnam was functioning minimally and that the U.S. should increase its pressure on North Vietnam. The memorandum proposed the resumption of the DE SOTO patrols and 34-A operations (but proposed a clear separation of the two), both of which had been suspended after the Gulf of Tonkin incidents, as well as limited air and ground operations by South Vietnam in the border area of Laos where infiltration was occurring, and tit-for-tat airstrikes against North Vietnam in the event of any additional Communist attacks on U.S. units or any significant attacks on targets in South Vietnam. The memorandum said that actions designed to provoke the North Vietnamese into attacking should not be attempted, however, "while the GVN [Government of Vietnam] is struggling to its feet," but that by early October such actions might be recommended, depending on progress in South Vietnam and the reaction of the North, especially to the DE SOTO patrols.[42]

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[40] Saigon to Washington 768, Sept. 6, 1964, in *ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 336-337.

[41] U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Central File, SNIE 53-64, Sept. 8, 1964. At that time, National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) and Special National Intelligence Estimates (SNIEs) were drafted by the Board of National Estimates, a group of 10 or 12 CIA intelligence officers, and then reviewed by other intelligence offices (primarily the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) in the State Department, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in the Defense Department, and the intelligence offices of the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force, with participation on some issues by the National Security Agency, the FBI, and the Atomic Energy Commission). After interagency review and whatever revisions had been agreed upon, estimates, (with dissenting footnotes if the difference of opinion had not been resolved through revision) was sent for approval to the United States Intelligence Board (USIB), consisting of representatives of each of the agencies, and chaired by the Director of Central Intelligence.

In 1973, the Board of National Estimates was replaced by a system under which 15 or so National Intelligence Officers (the number has varied) are responsible individually for managing the drafting and interagency review of estimates. They operate individually rather than as a board, although their collective existence was recognized with the establishment in 1980 of the National Intelligence Council, of which they are members. After estimates have been drafted, and after interagency review and revision have been completed, the estimates are approved by the National Foreign Intelligence Board (NFIB), which was the name given to the interagency group previously known as the United States Intelligence Board.

The author is grateful to his colleague, Alfred B. Prados, formerly a military intelligence officer who is now an intelligence analyst in the Congressional Research Service, for his help with this explanation.

At the meeting on September 9, 1964, President Johnson asked if anyone disagreed with the recommendations in the Bundy-Forrestal memorandum.[43] Except for a division within the JCS, where the Chief of Staff of the Air Force and the Commandant of the Marines argued that the U.S. should take prompt action to carry out extensive airstrikes against North Vietnam, there was no disagreement with the proposed program.

Ambassador Taylor was asked by the President why he did not favor more drastic immediate action, and he replied that it was important not to act when the government was in such an uncertain condition. The President expressed a similar opinion, saying that, "the proper answer to those advocating immediate and extensive action against the North was that we should not do this until our side could defend itself in the streets of Saigon."

The President asked the group "if anyone doubted whether it was worth all this effort."

> Ambassador Taylor replied that we could not afford to let Hanoi win, in terms of our overall position in the area and in the world. General Wheeler supported him most forcefully, reporting the unanimous view of the Joint Chiefs that if we should lose in South Vietnam, we would lose Southeast Asia. Country after country on the periphery would give way and look toward Communist China as the rising power of the area. Mr. McCone expressed his concurrence and so did the Secretary of State, with considerable force.

Thus, the reason for waiting, the President noted, "must be simply that with a weak and wobbly situation it would be unwise to attack until we could stabilize our base."

The President, as well as Rusk and McNamara, reemphasized that "money was no object," and Rusk, observing that it had cost $50,000 to kill a single guerrilla during the Communist insurgency in Greece in 1947-1948, said it would be "worth any amount to win." Taylor responded, however, that there was no shortage of funds.

The President added that "what disheartened him was that we had our best team out there for 60 days and had lost ground." (Taylor and his top associates, U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, and William Sullivan, had taken their posts in July.) Taylor said he thought the President had the wrong impression. There had been military progress "at the grass roots," he said. "Our current problem is political."

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[42] Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File. The fourth page of the memorandum appears to be missing from the copy in this file, but the *Pentagon Papers*, (Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 561-562), reprinted the entire memorandum.

[43] Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File, McGeorge Bundy notes of the meeting on Sept. 9, 1964.

The President concluded the meeting by approving the recommendation in the memorandum, reemphasizing that money was no object, and telling General Wheeler to explain to his JCS colleagues "that we would be ready to do more, when we had a base." He said he "did not wish to enter the patient in a 10-round bout, when he was in no shape to hold out for one round. We should get him ready to face 3 or 4 rounds at least."

The President's decisions were promulgated by NSAM 314, September 10, 1964, which directed that the additional steps be taken, but added: ". . . the first order of business at present is to take actions which will help to strengthen the fabric of the Government of South Vietnam; to the extent that the situation permits, such action should precede larger decisions. If such larger decisions are required at any time by a change in the situation, they will be taken." [44]

On September 13, there was an attempted coup against Khanh by other members of the Revolutionary Council, led by Gen. Lam Van Phat, then Minister of Interior in the Khanh government. After strong intervention by the U.S., which led to a "heated" three-hour "conversation" between Phat and U. Alexis Johnson (Taylor was in Washington), Phat yielded and the coup was called off.[45]

Between the promulgation of NSAM 314 on September 10 and the Presidential election on November 3, 1964, the U.S. continued to apply increasing pressure on North Vietnam as well as on the Government of South Vietnam, and the President's principal advisers continued to consider further action. In early October, there were reports that some of those advisers were openly advocating an expansion of military action.

In a memorandum on October 1 in preparation for a Presidential press interview, McGeorge Bundy suggested to the President that he should "give a hint of firmness," adding, "It is a better than even chance that we will be undertaking some air and land action in the Laotian corridor and even in North Vietnam within the next two months and we do not want the record to suggest even remotely that we campaigned on peace in order to start a war in November." [46]

The President ignored Bundy's advice and continued his campaign for peace and against sending U.S. troops to Vietnam. On October 21, for example, he said in a speech in Akron, Ohio: "Sometimes our folks get a little impatient. Sometimes they rattle their rockets some, and they bluff about their bombs. But we are not about to send American boys 9 or 10,000 miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves." [47]

On October 14, Ambassador Taylor warned that the political situation was becoming more critical and that infiltration was increasing. "I feel sure," he cabled Washington, "that we must soon adopt new and drastic methods to reduce and eventually end such infiltration if we are ever to succeed in South Vietnam." [48] The JCS agreed with Taylor, and in a memorandum on October 27 they urged that the U.S. attack the problem at its source—North Vietnam—through increased military pressure, including airstrikes on the North by South Vietnamese and unidentified U.S. planes (this time, contrary to their proposal in April, they proposed using U.S. pilots).[49]

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[44] For the text of NSAM 314 see *PP,* Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 565-566.

[45] U. Alexis Johnson with Jef Olivarius McAllister, *The Right Hand of Power* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1984), pp. 414-415.

[46] *New York Times,* Oct. 2, 1964, and Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

[47] U.S. President, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Service), Lyndon B. Johnson, 1963-1964, pp. 1390-1391.

On October 19, 1964, William Bundy sent a long memorandum, "The Choices We Face," to Rusk, McNamara, Ball and McGeorge Bundy for their consideration. These were the subjects it covered:[50]

> (1) Deterioration in SVN [South Vietnam] and increased toughness of NVN [North Vietnam] and China, with U.S. public wanting out
> (2) US stakes in SVN and Laos
> (3) Options open to US
> (4) Likely developments in SVN under present policies
> (5) Effect of low-risk actions outside SVN
> (6) Option A: Continue present policies indefinitely
> (7) Option B: Systematic military pressures against NVN
> (8) Option C: Continue present programs, but wink at intra-Vietnam negotiations
> (9) Option D: Continue present programs, but take a negotiating initiative ourselves
> (10) Option E: Continue present programs but add actions to convey a believable threat of force, then negotiate
> (11) Shoring up the next line of defense if SVN cannot be saved.

There is no available documentation with respect to what action, if any, was taken on Bundy's memorandum, but in early November he became head of a working group to propose a course of action for the U.S.

Planning for U.S. Attacks on North Vietnam

On November 1, 1964, the Communists attacked the air base at Bien Hoa, killing five Americans, wounding 76, and destroying or damaging 27 of 30 U.S. B-57s. Taylor and the JCS urged the President to retaliate with airstrikes on the North. With the election two days away, the President preferred to wait. Instead of retaliating, he suggested to Taylor that U.S. dependents should be withdrawn before bombing the North, and that it might also be desirable to deploy some U.S. ground forces to provide better protection for U.S. personnel and bases. Taylor replied that ground forces were not needed. He was "greatly surprised," he said later, "that the offer of ground troops was made so casually, as it seemed to me a much more difficult decision than the use of our air forces against military targets north of the seventeenth parallel." [51]

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[48] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 207.

[49] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[50] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers), notes made by William Bundy in 1969 cited above. Bundy said in a cover memorandum that it was a "think-piece" in response to a long memorandum by Ball on October 5 (see pt. II of this study, pp. 360-362) questioning U.S. policy. "The choices we face," Bundy said, "are clearly in the Hobson class, and I have not tried to arrive at any recommendation as to which is the least bad." The text of Bundy's responses, except for the first four pages, has been declassified and is in U.S. Department of State, Lot File 79 D 212.

On November 3, 1964, the day he was elected, President Johnson directed his advisers to prepare alternative courses of action for the U.S. According to a memorandum from the chairman of the interdepartmental Working Group, William Bundy, "Bien Hoa may be repeated at any time. This would tend to force our hand, but would also give us a good springboard for any decision for stronger action. The President is already thinking in terms of maximum use of a Gulf of Tonkin rationale, either for an action that would show toughness and hold the line till we can decide the big issue, or as a basis for starting a clear course of action under the broad options." [52]

During November, there was an intensive discussion of the three principal options which were being considered by the Working Group:

> Option A—To continue present policies indefinitely, including covert actions by the South Vietnamese against the North, and reprisals against the North by the U.S. and South Vietnam for any additional Communist "spectaculars," such as Bien Hoa.
>
> Option B—To add to present actions a systematic program of military pressure against the North, to be continued rapidly until objectives were reached. (This was called "full/fast squeeze" by McNaughton.)
>
> Option C—To add to present programs a combination of diplomatic moves indicating willingness to negotiate and graduated military moves against North Vietnam. (This was called "progressive squeeze and talk" by McNaughton.)

Toward the end of November, the Working Group gave its report to the President's top advisers, and after further discussions they recommended to the President a two-phase plan of action consisting of elements of Option A and Option C.[53] Phase I, which was to last for 30 days but could be extended, would involve increasing military pressure through present programs, as well as armed reconnaissance strikes (attacks on "targets of opportunity") in Laos against North Vietnamese infiltration routes and South Vietnamese and possibly U.S. "tit-for-tat" airstrikes in the southern part of North Vietnam (below the 19th parallel) in response to Communist attacks. At the end of Phase I there would be a "transition phase" in which, if the Communists had not begun to yield, additional pressure would be applied by attacks on infiltration routes in the southern part of North Vietnam, among other things. If the Communists still did not appear to be yielding, Phase II would begin, and for the next two to six months there would be progressively more severe airstrikes on targets in North Vietnam, beginning in the southern part below the 19th parallel and working north, until, if necessary, all targets on the "94 target list" drawn up by the JCS in April 1964 had been attacked. In addition, the report suggested that North Vietnamese ports could be mined and the U.S. Navy could establish a blockade.

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[51] Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972), p. 325.
[52] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 593.
[53] For the text see *ibid.*, pp. 678-683.

The "Position Paper on Southeast Asia" which outlined this plan, drafted by William Bundy on November 30, 1964 and formally approved by President Johnson on December 7, also provided that during the period the U.S. would ". . . continue to press the South Vietnamese Government in every possible way to make the government itself more effective and to push forward with the pacification program. We will also press upon leaders and members of all groups in that country the overriding need for national unity."

U.S. objectives, the paper stated, "are unchanged":

> 1. Get Hanoi and North Vietnam (DRV) support and direction removed from South Vietnam (SVN), and, to the extent possible, obtain DRV cooperation in ending Viet Cong (VC) operations in SVN.
>
> 2. Re-establish an independent and secure South Vietnam with appropriate international safeguards, including the freedom to accept US and other external assistance as required.
>
> 3. Maintain the security of other non-Communist nations in Southeast Asia including specifically the maintenance and observance of the Geneva Accords of 1962 in Laos.

Although there were some differences among the President's civilian advisers, they generally agreed with the proposed plan. The military, however, while approving increased pressure on North Vietnam, preferred a stronger, faster use of military force based on applying "maximum practicable conventional military power in a short time." [54]

On December 1, 1964, President Johnson met with Vice President-elect Hubert H. Humphrey, Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, William Bundy, Taylor, McCone, McNaughton, and General Wheeler.[55] Taylor began by saying that pacification was "bogging down"; the Communists were stronger; the South Vietnamese Government was weaker and more unstable. He called the situation a "losing game." "Who do you talk to?" the President asked, Taylor replied, "You have to identify focal points—military, Catholics, Buddhists, labor, and 'ambitious politicians' on the High National

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[54] *Ibid.*, p. 290. The definitive JCS position was stated in JCSM-955-64 (*ibid.*, pp. 628-630), and repeated in JCSM-982-64, Nov. 23, 1964, which is still classified. The JCS plan was summarized on Nov. 29, 1964 by William Bundy in his draft NSAM (*PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 679):

"The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommend immediate initiation of sharply intensified military pressure against the DRV, starting with a sharp and early attack in force on the DRV [Democratic Republic of Vietnam—North Vietnam], subsequent to brief operations in Laos and US low-level reconnaissance north of the boundary to divert DRV attention prior to the attack in force. This program would be designed to destroy in the first three days Phuc Yen airfield near Hanoi [North Vietnam's major air field], other airfields, and major POL [petroleum, oil, lubricants] facilities, clearly to establish the fact that the US intends to use military force to the full limits of what military force can contribute to achieving US objectives in Southeast Asia, and to afford the GVN [Government of Vietnam—South Vietnam] respite by curtailing DRV assistance to and direction of the Viet Cong. The follow-on military program—involving armed reconnaissance of infiltration routes in Laos, air strikes on infiltration targets in the DRV, and then progressive strikes throughout North Vietnam [attacks on the 94 targets proposed by the JCS on Apr. 17, 1964]—could be suspended short of full destruction of the DRV if our objectives were earlier achieved."

[55] There are no prepared notes of this meeting by someone designated to be the notetaker. There are, however, three sets of handwritten notes: McNaughton's, which are in the Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File; McGeorge Bundy's, which are in the Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy; William Bundy's, which are in his papers in U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240. The quotations used here are taken from all three sets of notes, but primarily from McNaughton's notes, which are the most complete of the three sets.

Council." "Where are the Communists?" the President asked, "In the Buddhists?" Taylor replied that the Communists were using the Buddhists. "Basic to all we do," the President said, "is pulling South Vietnamese together." "You know my views of Diem. Don't want another Diem." "How [can we] bring these people together," he asked, adding, "if it takes all SO [Special Operations—covert U.S. activities] and Rockefeller money. They do it or else. No point hitting North if South not together." "What more can we do?" the President asked. "It's hard," Taylor replied. The President: "Can't we say we just can't go on. Can't we have a warning?" Taylor: "Wonderful, but can we mean it?"

Saying, "Do we have any clout—have we played every card we've got and moved our stack?" the President asked Taylor whether the Pope could be used to influence the Catholics. "Maybe," Taylor said. What about the Buddhists, the President asked. "What on earth can we do with them—any way to get to them?" Taylor replied that this involved three or four Buddhist leaders, and that, "CIA sees no way to work with them. Don't want to exile them." "Let's get thinkers to work on ABCD's to Buddhists," the President responded. What about the military? the President added. "Have we oversold them on the notion that we are bound to be a power in the Pacific?"

The President then asked Taylor whether the U.S. had done everything it could. "If dollars, give 'em. [I do] not want to send widow woman to slap Jack Dempsey [a famous American boxer]." The "day of reckoning" was coming, he said, but he wanted to be sure that everything possible had been done. The U.S., he said, "could have kept" Diem. "Should we get another one?" Taylor replied: "We need one. Maybe [Premier] Huong and [Deputy Premier] Vien together may be a Diem."

What about contributions from U.S. allies? the President asked, saying he was not sure that the U.S. had been "tough enough with our allies—it's shocking we've done so little." He asked Taylor for a list of what he needed from other countries and asked Rusk to develop a plan for getting more help.

General Wheeler then spoke, urging firm action, and the President said he agreed but wanted first to have everything in order.

Taylor asked the President whether he approved the program drawn up during November, and the President replied that he did, but that he would decide "exactly what at the time." He said he was, "never reluctant to stand up, but must do damndest in SVN," get as many allies as possible, and plan to get U.S. dependents out. "Before Wheeler saddles up, try everything." [56] "If more of the same, then I'll be talking to you, General [Wheeler]."

President Johnson then met on December 3 with Ambassador Taylor to discuss what Taylor would say to the South Vietnamese. There are no available notes of that meeting, but written instructions from the President to Taylor on December 3, 1964 stated that there were two primary causes for the lack of progress in South

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[56] In pt. II of this study, p. 376, this quotation was given as follows: "Before Wheeler saddles up [and U.S. Army goes in] try everything." The author is grateful to Army Historian Vincent Demma for pointing out that there is nothing in the notes on the meeting to support this suggestion that the phrase "saddles up" referred to the U.S. Army. Rather, it would appear that the President was speaking more generally about the use of U.S. forces.

Vietnam: first, governmental instability in Saigon, and, second, continued reinforcement and direction of the insurgents by the North Vietnamese.[57] "It is clear, however," the instructions stated, "that these factors are not of equal importance. There must be a stable, effective government to conduct a successful campaign against the Viet Cong even if the aid of North Vietnam for the VC should end. . . . Since action against North Vietnam is contributory, not central, we should not run the risks which are inherent in such an expansion of hostilities until there is a government in Saigon capable of handling the serious problems involved in such an expansion and of exploiting the favorable effects which can be anticipated from an end of support and direction by North Vietnam."

The instructions went on to suggest "certain minimum criteria of performance in South Vietnam which must be met before new measures against North Vietnam would be either justified or practicable":

> At a minimum, the government should be able to speak for and to its people who will need guidance and leadership throughout the coming critical period. It should be capable of maintaining law and order in its principal centers of population, make plans for the conduct of operations and assure their effective execution by military and police forces completely responsive to its authority. It must have the means to cope with the enemy reactions which must be expected to result from any change in the pattern of our operations.

Taylor was also instructed to urge the South Vietnamese to concentrate their efforts on eight specific areas, which, the paper stated, were not only important for purposes of the pacification program, but could also serve as indices of the ability of the government to perform effectively:

> 1. Improve the use of manpower for military and pacification purposes.
> 2. Bring the armed forces and police to authorized strength and maximize their effectiveness.
> 3. Replace incompetent officials and commanders. Freeze the competent in place for extended periods of service.
> 4. Clarify and strengthen the police powers of arrest, detention and interrogation of VC suspects.
> 5. Clarify and strengthen the authority of provincial chiefs.
> 6. Make demonstrable progress in the Hop Tac operation around Saigon [a program to pacify an area in which the Communists were well-entrenched].[58]

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[57] The text of the President's instructions to Taylor is in the Johnson Library, NSF International Meetings and Travel File. Taylor presented a paper to the South Vietnamese which differed only slightly from the instructions. See *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. II, pp. 343-345.

[58] Hop Tac (the words mean "cooperation") was a plan to pacify the seven provinces around Saigon, based on the spreading oil spot principle or concept which originated in the early 1960s during the administration of President Kennedy. Under the plan, security would expand outwardly in concentric circles from a secure center (Saigon), as areas were cleared, secured, and then pacified. Once the South Vietnamese Army cleared an area, paramilitary forces would secure and hold it while the process of pacification was being completed by civic action teams, and the Army would move further out in an effort to search for and destroy Communist forces. (This was the origin of the term "search and destroy.")

Continued

7. Broaden and intensify the civic action program using both military and civilian resources to produce tangible evidence of the desire of the government to help the hamlets and villages.

8. Carry out a sanitary clean-up of Saigon.

Taylor was also instructed to tell the South Vietnamese that, "While progress is being made toward these goals by a government of growing effectiveness, the USG is willing to strike harder at the infiltration routes in Laos and at sea [Phase I]." In addition, during this time U.S. and South Vietnamese forces should be prepared for "prompt reprisals for any unusually hostile action."

". . . after the GVN has shown itself firmly in control," the instructions continued, the U.S. was "prepared to consider a program of direct military pressure on the DRV as Phase II," consisting of a "series of air attacks on the DRV progressively mounting in scope of intensity for the purpose of convincing the leaders of DRV that it is to their interest to cease to aid the Viet Cong and to respect the independence and security of South Vietnam, properly assured by appropriate international safeguards."

In a memorandum to Rusk, McNamara, and McCone on December 7, 1964, the President gave his formal approval to the new graduated pressure plan. He said that the "Position Paper on Southeast Asia," together with the instructions to Ambassador Taylor, represented his "present position." He added: "I consider it a matter of the highest importance that the substance of this position should not become public except as I specifically direct." [59]

On December 7, Ambassador Taylor, Gen. William C. Westmoreland, Commander, U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV) and U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Ambassador, met with General Khanh and the new South Vietnamese civilian leaders, Premier Tran Van Huong and Deputy Premier Nguyen Luu Vien.[60] Taylor presented the U.S. program, but the Vietnamese said they did not understand what was meant by "campaign against the Viet Cong" and by the phrase "to speak for and to its people." They also noted that the U.S. plan did not deal with the question of the use of Cambodia as a sanctuary by the Communists.

The plan, proposed in July 1964 by Ambassador Lodge, was put into effect in September 1964 according to a design developed by American military personnel. It was not well-received by the South Vietnamese, however, and by the summer of 1965, after numerous setbacks and very limited success, it had been "defeated" according to one analyst: "Security in Long An province [adjacent to and south of Saigon] was worse than it had been in 1964 when the program started. Bao Trai, the capitol of Hau Nghia province [west of Sagion], was virtually isolated; no roads were usable, even by day. The province was so dominated by the Viet Cong that they staged a victory parade in Cu Chi district in August 1965." James W. Dunn, "Province Advisers in Vietnam, 1962-1965," ch 1. in Richard A. Hunt and Richard H. Schultz, Jr., (eds.), *Lessons from an Unconventional War* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982) pp. 1-23 at 17.

See also *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. II, pp. 521-530, and Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era* (New York: Free Press, 1977), pp. 222-223.

[59] Johnson Library, NSF International Meetings and Travel File. (The position paper, dated Dec. 2, 1964, was excised in part before being released, but it is a verbatim copy of the Bundy draft memorandum of November 30, the full text of which is in *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 678.) There was no NSAM, apparently to help ensure the secrecy of the plan as well as to maintain greater Presidential flexibility.

[60] In October 1964, Khanh, who, since the problems of August-September 1964, had eased out his rivals—Khiem went to the U.S. as Ambassador and Minh was sent on a goodwill tour abroad—had arranged for the appointment of a civilian government consisting of Premier Huong, Deputy Premier Vien and Chief of State Phan Khac Suu, and a body of notables—the High National Council—to serve as a legislature. However, Khanh, as commander of the armed forces and the putative leader of the Revolutionary Military Council, continued to hold the reins of power.

On December 9, the two groups met again, and Taylor gave the Vietnamese the text of a paper, "Actions Designed to Strengthen the Government of Vietnam," which contained the eight specific areas on which the U.S. wanted the South Vietnamese to concentrate. According to the *Pentagon Papers,* "The only decisions reached were for joint study and consultations. . . . This was the last time the USG tried to set GVN performance preconditions for U.S. force use and deployments. Its effect, if any, was the opposite of that intended." [61]

In the meeting on December 1 at which he approved the new plan, the President told Rusk and McNamara to inform selected Members of Congress of the decision. According to the notes of the meeting, they were to "give [Congress] good and bad; ask for suggestions." [62]

Taylor also was asked by the President to "touch base with the Hill" before returning to Vietnam, and on December 3 he met in executive (closed) session with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.[63] He told the committee that officials of the executive branch generally agreed that the U.S. had to take action against North Vietnam at some stage, but that this should not be done when the South Vietnamese Government was as weak as it was at that time. Chairman J. William Fulbright (D/Ark.) said he was willing to work with the existing South Vietnamese Government, but that if it fell he would not support a U.S. attack on the North as a way of compensating for weakness in the South. Taylor replied that he would accept a "military dictatorship" if it were necessary to achieve the governmental stability which the U.S. desired as a precondition for attacking the North.

Fulbright and Frank Church (D/Idaho) expressed concern about major U.S. military involvement in the war. ". . . if you want to go to war," Fulbright said, "I don't approve of it. I don't give a damn what the provocation is. . . . I am not going to vote to send a hundred thousand men, or it would probably be 300,000 or 400,000. The French had 500,000." Taylor replied that the U.S. could attack the North from the air, "and let it go at that." Fulbright was skeptical: "Well, if it doesn't succeed—America never fails—once it engages in that they will just go all out."

In a memorandum to the President on December 9, 1964, Senate Majority Leader Mansfield also expressed concern about further U.S. involvement in the war, and urged the President to work toward a "peaceful unification" of all of Vietnam, North and South. "We remain on a course in Vietnam," he said, "which takes us further and further out on the sagging limb. . . ." [64]

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[61] *PP,* Gravel ed., vol. II, p. 345, from Saigon to State 1746, Dec. 7, 1964, and 1763 and 1764, Dec. 9, 1964.

[62] Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File.

[63] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Together With Joint Sessions With the Senate Armed Services Committee* (Historical Series), 1964, vol. XVI (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1988), pp. 354, 369.

[64] Johnson Library, NSF Name File, Mansfield. For further details on Mansfield's memorandum and the President's reply see pt. II of this study, pp. 377-379. For a discussion of congressional attitudes in early January 1965, see pp. 394-397.

Phase I Begins as the South Vietnamese Political Situation Becomes More Critical

On December 14, 1964, Phase I of the new U.S. graduated pressure plan began amid hopes in Saigon and Washington that the political situation was improving and that the South Vietnamese Government would be able to implement U.S. preconditions for stronger military action. A few days later, however, Khanh and the "Young Turk" military officers on the Military Revolutionary Council,[65] most of whom had supported Khanh during the political crisis in September 1964, demanded that the civilian legislature, the High National Council, members of which had been chosen by General Minh, dismiss General Minh as well as other leading officers who had been in the post-Diem junta. When they refused, Khanh and the Young Turks announced the abolition of the High National Council and arrested some of its members as well as other civilian leaders and some military officers, and placed Minh and four other generals in confinement. Premier Huong and Chief of State Phan Khac Suu were allowed to remain in their posts. The Military Revolutionary Council was replaced by an Armed Forces Council headed by Khanh.[66]

The U.S. reacted sharply to these developments. On December 20, Ambassador Taylor and Deputy Ambassador Johnson, who had urged Premier Huong not to yield to Khanh and the Young Turks, met with four of the Young Turks—Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu (commanding the Army in IV Corps), Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky (commanding the Air Force), Rear Adm. Chung Tang Cang (chief of Naval Operations), and Gen. Nguyen Chanh Thi (who commanded I Corps forces in the predominantly Buddhist area around Hue, and was very popular with the Buddhists)—and lectured them on the need for political stability as a precondition for stronger U.S. military action. Reminding the group that at a dinner at General Westmoreland's on December 8, at which the new U.S. plan was explained, he had told them that "we Americans were tired of coups," Taylor said, "Apparently I wasted my words. Maybe this is because something is wrong with my French because you evidently didn't understand. I made it clear that all the military plans which I know you would like to carry out are dependent on governmental stability. Now you have made a real mess. We cannot carry you forever if you do things like this." [67]

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[65] The term "Young Turks" was used in reference to the younger generals on the Council who were allied with Khanh. The group included Gens. Nguyen Van Thieu, Nguyen Cao Ky, Nguyen Chanh Thi, Le Nguyen Khang, and Nguyen Huu Co, and Adm. Chung Tang Cang.

[66] The removal of Minh and other of the so-called "Dalat generals" of the post-Diem junta was part of a complicated scheme by the Young Turks to control Khanh, who in turn had apparently been seeking to gain support from the Dalat generals in an effort to counter the rising power of the Young Turks. For more details, see the extensive reporting of the *New York Times*, as well as Robert Shaplen, *The Lost Revolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Viking, 1983); Kahin, *Intervention*.

[67] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, "Summary of Conversation, Sunday, December 20," Saigon to State AIRGRAM A-493, Dec. 24, 1964. In his memoir, *Swords and Plowshares*, (p. 330), Taylor says that he and U. Alexis Johnson agreed on the response which should be made to the Young Turks, and that he decided to treat the generals "with calculated asperity."

On Jan. 5, 1965, McGeorge Bundy sent the airgram to the President with a note saying, "I think you will want to read every word of this, and make up your own mind as to its implications." Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

The response of Khanh and the Young Turks, after a meeting the next day between Taylor and Khanh, in which Taylor told Khanh that he had lost confidence in him and that he should leave office,[68] was to defy Taylor and the Americans by demanding that Taylor leave Vietnam, to which the U.S. Embassy, after consulting with Washington, replied that this was tantamount to asking the U.S. to leave.

On December 24, 1964, the Communists set off explosives at a U.S. officers' billet in Saigon which killed two and injured 38 other Americans and 13 Vietnamese. President Johnson was urged by Taylor, Westmoreland, CINCPAC and the JCS to retaliate against North Vietnam, but this was rejected. As the *Pentagon Papers* states: [69]

> The immediate administration assessment was that under current political circumstances, neither the American public nor international opinion might believe that the VC had done it. Moreover, with clear evidence lacking, it was felt that a reprisal at this time might appear as though "we are trying to shoot our way out of an internal political crisis." Given the political disorder in Saigon, the administration believed "it would be hard for [the] American public to understand action to extend [the] war."

On December 30, President Johnson sent a personal message to Ambassador Taylor in which he said, referring to the "continuing political turmoil in Saigon," that the "general confusion in South Vietnam makes me feel strongly that we are not in a position which justifies a policy of immediate reprisal." [70] The President, who had made the same point in earlier communications with Taylor, added that he could not understand why women and children should remain in the "battle zone," and that his "readiness to authorize larger actions will be very much greater if we can remove the dependents and get ourselves into real fighting trim." He said, however, that he did not intend for that or other parts of his cable to be an order to Taylor.

The President also told Taylor that he was reluctant to approve reprisal when, as in this instance, U.S. security appeared to be inadequate.

The President added that he was ". . . worried, too, by our lack of progress in communicating sensitively and persuasively with the various groups in South Vietnam. I recognize the very great problems which we face in dealing with groups which are immature and often irresponsible. But I still do not feel that we are making the all-out effort of political persuasion which is called for." He said he wondered "whether we are making full use of the kind of Americans who have shown a knack for this kind of communication in the past . . . men who are skillful with Vietnamese, even if they are not always the easiest men to handle in a country team."[71]

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[68] Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, p. 331.

[69] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 262.

[70] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, CAP 6435 from the President to Lodge, Dec. 30, 1964.

The President also emphasized again his feeling that the war had to be fought on the ground and could not be won through air power alone:

> Every time I get a military recommendation it seems to me that it calls for large-scale bombing: I have never felt that this war will be won from the air, and it seems to me that what is much more needed and would be more effective is a larger and stronger use of Rangers and Special Forces and Marines, or other appropriate military strength on the ground and on the scene. I am ready to look with great favor on that kind of increased American effort, directed at the guerrillas and aimed to stiffen the aggressiveness of Vietnamese military units up and down the line. Any recommendation that you or General Westmoreland make in this sense will have immediate attention from me, although I know that it may involve the acceptance of larger American sacrifices. We have been building our strength to fight his kind of war ever since 1961, and I myself am ready to substantially increase the number of Americans in Vietnam if it is necessary to provide this kind of fighting force against the Viet Cong.

In conclusion, the President told Taylor, "If you can give me either progress or persuasive arguments on these matters [evacuation of dependents, better security, building better political relations, increased use of ground units], I would look with favor on the execution of immediate and automatic reprisal . . . in the event of further attacks."

On January 6, 1965, Taylor, with the concurrence of U. Alexis Johnson and Westmoreland, replied to the President's cable of December 30.[72] ". . . we are presently on a losing track," Taylor said, "and must risk a change. . . . To take no positive action now is to accept defeat in the fairly near future." After describing the situation and discussing the basic historical factors which were "responsible" for the "turmoil" in South Vietnam, Taylor, alluding to the President's proposal for using Americans who were skilled in dealing with the Vietnamese, added: "Perhaps other Americans might marginally influence them [factors responsible for the turmoil] more effectively but generally speaking we Americans are not going to change them in any fundamental way in any measurable time. We can only recognize their existence and adjust our plans and expectations accordingly." There are, he said, "some things we clearly cannot do—change national characteristics, create leadership where it does not exist, raise large additional GVN forces or seal porous frontiers to infiltration . . . in the time available we cannot expect anything better than marginal government and marginal pacification progress with continued decline of national morale—unless something new is added to make up for those things we cannot control."

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[71] McGeorge Bundy edited the cable (the edited version is in the same location as the cable), inserting the words "men who are skillful with Vietnamese" in place of the words "of the general type of [Edward G.] Lansdale and [Lucien] Conein" in the original draft. Lansdale and Conein were CIA agents (Lansdale was technically in the Air Force) who had worked extensively with the South Vietnamese since the early 1950s. In December 1964, Lansdale, who had retired as a major general from the Air Force in the fall of 1963, was a consultant to the White House Food for Peace program.

[72] Same location, Saigon to Washington 2052 and 2055-2058 (a four-section message), Jan. 6, 1965. For a more complete discussion of the cable see pt. II of this study, pp. 387-389.

They recommended giving the Government of South Vietnam a "conditional commitment" that if it reached a "certain level of performance" the U.S. would then conduct reprisal attacks against North Vietnam. Such attacks, the cable said, would stimulate further improvements in the South Vietnamese Government and in the unification of the armed forces and thereby set the stage for Phase II actions.

The cable added that the U.S. "should look for an occasion" for reprisals "just as soon as we have satisfactorily compromised the current political situation in Saigon and set up a minimal government. . . ." Then, "At the proper time, we can set the stage for [Phase II] action by exposing to the [U.S.] public our case against infiltration, and by initiating aggressive DE SOTO patrols," and when the U.S. decided to move into Phase II, "we can justify that decision on the basis of infiltration, of VC terrorism, of attacks on DE SOTO patrols or any combination of the three."

Taylor said he agreed with the President that the war against the guerrillas in South Vietnam could not be won by air power, but he conceived of the use of airpower in Phase II as being a way of bringing pressure on the North Vietnamese who, as "practical men . . . cannot wish to see the fruits of ten years of labor destroyed by slowly escalating air attacks (which they cannot prevent) without trying to find some accommodations which will excise the threat."

With respect to the use of U.S. ground forces, Taylor said he concurred with Westmoreland's position, which was stated in a portion of the cable prepared by Westmoreland and his staff, as follows:

> . . . after much soul searching we have reluctantly concluded that their [U.S. ground forces] military value would be more than offset by their political liability. The Vietnamese have the manpower and the basic skills to win this war. What they lack is motivation. The entire advisory effort has been devoted to giving them both skill and motivation. If that effort has not succeeded there is less reason to think that U.S. combat forces would have the desired effect. In fact, there is good reason to believe that they would have the opposite effect by causing some Vietnamese to let the U.S. carry the burden while others, probably the majority, would actively turn against us. Thus intervention with ground combat forces would at best buy time and would lead to ever increasing commitments until, like the French, we would be occupying an essentially hostile foreign country.

During early January 1965 there was increasing concern among U.S. policymakers about the growing military and political strength of the Communists. In a battle at Binh Gia between December 26 and January 2, well-armed and well-trained South Vietnamese Army units, supported by considerable American advice and assistance, were badly defeated.

On January 15, the CIA concluded that the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, which had been organized in 1960 in opposition to the government of Ngo Dinh Diem, and was controlled by the Communists, ". . . had extended its influence if not its control, into nearly every corner of South Vietnam." [73] The Front claimed to control three-quarters of the country and eight of the fourteen million people. "Outside of large urban centers such as Saigon and Hue," the report said, "and those provincial strongpoints manned by the South Vietnamese Army, the Viet Cong roam the countryside more or less at will. With the faltering of the GVN's strategic hamlet program, many areas considered cleared of Viet Cong a year ago have been lost or are subjected to constant guerrilla pressure. . . . There are no indications that the government in Saigon will be able in the near future to counter effectively the steady increase in VC-controlled territory, and therefore the Front's influence and control seem bound to grow."

In response to these and related developments, the U.S. Army undertook a study of ways to improve military operations in South Vietnam. A directive on January 15 from the Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations (DCSOPS) stated that in the study, which had been requested by the Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Harold K. Johnson, ". . . emphasis is to be placed on military objectives, missions, policies, and operations. We want to know if all the things we are doing really contribute to attaining the military objective and what else we can do and should do." [74] The directive added: "We realize that solution to the overall problem involves more than a military effort (i.e., political, psychological, sociological, economic), but no progress in the other fields is likely without progress in the military field—defeat of the Viet Cong."

The directive also stated: "A quick solution to the South Vietnamese problem is extremely unlikely though desirable. Therefore, we must assume that the involvement in RVN [Republic of Vietnam] may last as long as 10 years. Our actions should recognize this possibility."

The resulting 114-page study, "Analysis of the Military Effort in South Vietnam," which was completed in March 1965, found that Communist forces were increasing in size, strength and effectiveness, that South Vietnamese forces lacked leadership and the will to fight, and that pacification was lagging except in the Hop Tac area around Saigon.[75]

Overall, the study concluded, "there has been no significant improvement in the military situation. Because of continued political instability at national level and the condensation [*sic*] of pacification effort, the RVN [Republic of Vietnam—South Vietnam] gave ground to the VC [Viet Cong] pressures almost universally. With the exception of the priority 'Hop Tac' area where the GVN [Government of Vietnam] maintained the initiative, the *status quo* has not been maintained."

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[73] U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Central File, Special Report, "The Communist Liberation Front in South Vietnam—A Progress Report," SC No. 00653/65C, Jan. 15, 1965. There is no indication as to which office of the CIA prepared the report.

[74] U.S. Department of the Army, Center of Military History (hereafter referred to as CMH), Memorandum from the Deputy Chief of Staff for Military Operations, "Analysis of the Military Effort in South Vietnam," with attached outline, Jan. 15, 1965.

The outline included these objectives:

"a. *U.S. Objective.* The U.S. objective in South Vietnam is to re-establish an independent and secure South Vietnam with appropriate international safeguards, including the freedom to accept U.S. and other external assistance as required. Attainment of this objective involves activities in five fields—sociological, political, economic, psychological, and military. . . .

"b. *Military Objectives.* From the overall objective this military objective can be derived: To destroy the Viet Cong and/or his will to fight and to provide security for the country. This, then, becomes the primary mission of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). U.S. policy is that the Vietnamese should fight their own war with advice, assistance and support from us. Therefore, the U.S. military role in South Vietnam is to advise, assist and support the RVNAF in their fight against the Viet Cong."

[75] A copy of the study, which is not dated, is in CMH. For a description of Hop Tac, see p. 21 above.

The study began with a description of the enemy situation. It estimated the number of Communist forces in the South at about 33,000 full-time regular forces—compared to 10,000 in 1960—and 60-80,000 part-time irregular forces. Infiltration of personnel from the North, it said, was higher in 1964 than in any other previous year with the possible exception of 1962, and almost twice that of 1963. For the first time, ethnic North Vietnamese were coming across the border.

Although the Communists were still fighting a guerrilla war, and would not attempt conventional warfare "unless they are dissatisfied with the results of their present activities, and they have little reason to feel dissatisfied as yet," they were more capable than previously of conducting conventional warfare. This was demonstrated at the battle of Binh Gia in early January 1965, when Communist forces remained in the village for several days and held parts of it against sustained attack by South Vietnamese forces.

The South Vietnamese Army, by contrast, while it could maintain the security of urban areas and lines of communication, "has been unable to overcome the VC efforts in subversion, terrorism and guerrilla warfare, nor has it provided adequate, country-wide security." "The principal weakness," the study continued, "seems to be in small unit tactics, scouting and patrolling, collection and processing of intelligence."

> The pattern of military operations during 1964 has been one of reaction to VC activities rather than ARVN initiative. The RVNAF have not completely followed the principle of offensive action. In order to find, fix and fight the VC, ARVN must find the enemy and aggressively follow through. Since VC use the night for movement and relocation, ARVN should use more aggressive patrolling to force the VC to stay on the move and off balance. Constant movement of company and battalion size regular units at night could instill more initiative and aggressiveness in the ARVN clearing operations. Once the enemy has been located either through ARVN initiative, or as a result of VC attack, the pattern of ARVN operations has been characterized by slow reaction, piecemeal commitment, and seldom have [there been] sufficient forces at the critical point to bring about decisive and successful defeats of VC elements. When on rare occasions initiative was employed and aggressive follow-up continued, ARVN was able to defeat the VC decisively.

The study was critical of large sweep operations, which "produce negligible results," but it said that the concept of search and destroy operations using helicopter-borne infantry units as quick reaction forces had been a success.[76]

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[76] At that time (early 1965) the term "search and destroy" was used in connection with the design for the Hop Tac pacification program to describe the operations which would be carried out by South Vietnamese forces as they cleared areas previously controlled by the Communists. Only later was it used to refer to the large sweeps conducted by U.S. forces.

With respect to intelligence operations, the study stated that because of weaknesses in South Vietnam's intelligence and counterintelligence, "The Viet Cong regularly demonstrate detailed knowledge of both short and long term Government of Vietnam (GVN) operational plans, often in sufficient time to prepare relatively complex countermeasures. . . . Directives and plans are routinely compromised." "Improvements in GVN security procedures, particularly communications security must be made; otherwise there can be no hope of establishing a consistent pattern of successful operations against the Viet Cong."

Although there had been little progress in pacification, the study concluded that the concepts on which Hop Tac was based were sound and that better management was needed of the securing and pacifying of cleared areas. Rather than switching from military to civilian management after an area was cleared, it would be more effective to maintain military management and to resume civilian control once an area was "completely secure." Accordingly, the study proposed that the U.S. Military Command in South Vietnam should be made responsible for the direction "of all aspects of the clearing and securing phase of pacification." (This was carried out in 1967, when responsibility for pacification was removed from civilian control and given to MACV.)

Looking ahead to similar situations in other parts of the world, the report also recommended that a plan be developed by the staff of the Army "to establish and maintain an effective capability within the Army to advise and assist friendly foreign governments in counterinsurgency pacification operations. . . ."

The study also discussed "Special Operations"—covert activities conducted by the South Vietnamese and the U.S. against North Vietnam since the beginning of 1964. These were the 34-A operations, which included MAROPS (maritime operations—attacks on the North Vietnamese coast), behind the lines military teams which were airdropped in North Vietnam, and propaganda operations. In addition, special operations included YANKEE TEAM tactical air reconnaissance flights by the U.S. Air Force and Navy over Laos, and BARREL ROLL, which involved U.S. armed reconnaissance and airstrikes in Laos against Communist forces.

According to the study, "the material effectiveness of [34-A] operations has been marginal," but from a psychological standpoint all of the 34-A operations had been useful, "especially in signalling to the DRV [Democratic Republic of Vietnam—North Vietnam] that they are not completely immune to military and political retaliatory actions." [77]

The study noted that two of the activities which had been requested in the original plan in January 1964 had never been carried out—covert airstrikes by the South Vietnamese Air Force against military targets in the southern part of North Vietnam, and the organization and development of organized resistance groups in North Vietnam, "under the mantle of 'Liberation Party' "—and it recommended that both activities be authorized.

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[77] The study said that MAROPS had been the most successful 34-A operation, and had caused the North Vietnamese to have to strengthen their coastal defenses and naval forces. Behind-the-lines teams, however, had suffered a 50 percent loss, and had conducted only three sabotage missions. Propaganda activities were considered to be useful by "causing concern and are probably planting the seeds of doubt and dissension which can be germinated over a longer period of time."

Finally, the study concluded that in order to improve the counterinsurgency program, the U.S. needed to find better ways of motivating the Vietnamese:

> If there is a basic weakness in the conduct of the U.S. counterinsurgency effort in SVN it stems primarily from failure to recognize the fundamental weaknesses and strengths of the Vietnamese people as measured by our standards and the peculiar workings of the oriental mind. The RVN military inherently have the same capabilities as the Viet Cong. Utilization of these capabilities is dependent upon motivation, training and leadership. The leadership potential is present; training is a matter of time, tools and the capability of U.S. training advisors; motivation is a matter of appreciation of the oriental mind and an understanding of the peculiar sense of values by which the RVN govern their efforts. It is the intangible element of motivation that seems to elude solution. It has puzzled Westerners for years and major effort has been expended searching for solutions. We must continue to pursue this problem and orient the training of U.S. advisors to cope with and to capitalize on those forces that motivate the RVN leadership at each echelon of the military and the governmental organization.[78]

By the time this report was completed, however, it had been overtaken by events. The first U.S. combat forces had been deployed in Vietnam, and, as will be seen, General Westmoreland, having been told by the President that there was no limitation on funds, matériel or manpower, had requested deployment of additional U.S. forces.

January 1965: The President and His Advisers Ponder Phase II

When Taylor's January 6 cable was received, the President met that day with his advisers to discuss the situation. In advance of the meeting, William Bundy prepared a memorandum on January 6 for Rusk, which he said represented also the views of his deputy for Southeast Asia, Leonard Unger, as well as those of Michael Forrestal, head of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee, recommending that the U.S. take stronger action against North Vietnam.[79] "I think we must accept," the memorandum said, "that Saigon morale in all quarters is now very shaky indeed, and that this relates directly to a widespread feeling that the U.S. is not ready for stronger action and indeed is possibly looking for a way out." "The blunt fact," he added, "is that we have appeared to the

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[78] On Feb. 1, 1965, Gen. William E. DePuy, who was Westmoreland's J-3 (Operations), sent Westmoreland a three-page, single-spaced memorandum on "Motivation" (a copy is in the file at CMH), in which he said, "The longer we observe the situation in South Vietnam the more we come to believe that motivation is the key to success or the cause of failure." Pointing out that the Communists placed great emphasis on indoctrinating their forces, he concluded, ". . . it is our conviction in J-3 that unless we devise a system whereby we can go into the minds of every member of the RVNAF and eventually through them and other public officials into the minds of all of the effective leadershp of the country, and lead them into a conviction that the government can and must win for good and logical reasons, we will have no chance in the long run of seeing any return on our very extensive investment."

[79] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers).

Vietnamese (and to wide circles in Asia and even in Europe) to be insisting on a more perfect government than can reasonably be expected, before we consider any additional action—and that we might even pull out our support unless such a government emerges." By the same token, Bundy argued, the North Vietnamese were "extremely confident." His prognosis was that "the situation in Vietnam is now likely to come apart more rapidly than we had anticipated in November."

The alternative of stronger action, Bundy said, would present "grave difficulties": "It commits the U.S. more deeply, at a time when the picture of South Vietnamese will is extremely weak. To the extent that it included actions against North Vietnam, it would be vigorously attacked by many nations and disapproved initially even by such nations as Japan and India, on present indications. Most basically, its stiffening effect on the Saigon political situation would not be at all sure to bring about a more effective government, nor would limited actions against the southern DRV [against infiltration routes] in fact sharply reduce infiltration or, in present circumstances, be at all likely to induce Hanoi to call it off."

Stronger actions, however, would ". . . have some faint hope of really improving the Vietnamese situations, and, above all, would put us in a much stronger position to hold the next line of defense, namely Thailand."

There were, William Bundy said, three actions that the U.S. could take in the near future: low-level armed reconnaissance of the North beginning immediately, and, on an "early occasion," reprisal attacks. Concurrently, U.S. dependents would be evacuated. But these actions, Bundy said, would hasten the deterioration of the situation in Saigon unless they were taken in the context of stronger actions, and he said that "to many of us" the deployment of limited U.S. ground forces into the northern part of South Vietnam at the time when air attacks on the North were begun "still has great appeal." "It would have a real stiffening effect in Saigon, and a strong signal effect to Hanoi." "On the disadvantage side," he added, "such forces would be possible attrition targets for the Viet Cong." [80]

Also on January 6, prior to the meeting, NSC staff member Chester L. Cooper (formerly with the CIA), who had long experience in dealing with Vietnam, sent McGeorge Bundy a memorandum [81] in which he argued that there was a risk of "greatly expanded hostilities" if the U.S. bombed the North, as well as a "considerable risk" that such bombing would not be effective in persuading the North Vietnamese to cease supporting the insurgency or to negotiate. Military victories in the South, he said, would be more persuasive and less risky. He recommended that rather than continuing to provide advice, U.S. military personnel should become more involved in the conduct of military operations in the South: "What is needed is to undertake the kind of top-level strategic and tactical planning using ARVN forces that we would be using if it were indeed our war. This will take some new arrangements with the GVN, some additional high-powered U.S. staff officers and a willingness to assume the risk of authority and responsibility for failure as well as success."

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[80] In a draft on Jan. 4, 1965, McNaughton, observing that the U.S. had two stakes in South Vietnam: "(a) Buffer real estate near Thailand and Malaysia, and (b) Our reputation," and that the latter was more important than the former, said that he favored evacuation of dependents and reprisals against the North, but he was opposed to increasing the number of U.S. forces in Vietnam, which were "as likely to be counterproductive as productive." For the text of his draft see *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 683-684.

[81] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, "Vietnam Today and Tomorrow."

Cooper also commented on the question of the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese Government: "All we need—and all we should press for—is a government that is in charge, that is prepared to continue the war, that is receptive to our advice, and that has enough support or at least acceptance among the various political groups to stay in power for a couple of years—or, at least, have its personnel shuffled and structure modified only in reasonably orderly fashion. Whether it's a military, civilian, democratic or autocratic government is beside the point now."

At the meeting on January 6 from 5:03 p.m. to 6:44 p.m. of the President, Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy and Ball, there was a wide-ranging discussion of the problems facing the U.S. in Vietnam. Rusk began by saying, "We can't fail to make every effort to change the situation on the scene because the alternatives are so grim." He added that he was "more optimistic than others." [82] McNamara agreed that, "in DR's [Dean Rusk] terms, we should do all we can [but] it won't be enough unless we do more." Maj. Gen. Edward G. Lansdale, he said, "has some ideas: better contact with Vietnamese." There was, he added, lack of effective contact with Buddhists and with students.

McNamara read from the cable describing Taylor and U. Alexis Johnson's meeting with South Vietnamese leaders on December 20, when Taylor had lectured them on the need for political stability. There was some discussion of the possible need to withdraw Taylor. Rusk commented: "He could well be used up politically; that happens." He said that U. Alexis Johnson was a "load-bearing wall," and that it would be a mistake to bring him back. He could be put in the CIA, however, and left in Saigon if Taylor were replaced.

Ball commented that the "only answer" in South Vietnam was a "strong man." He said it was "not a country," but a "piece of one," which was "damned tired after 20 years." "Regime has got smell of death—you can't pin 'em together."

The "options are all bad," Ball said, and the "risks of escalation too great if regime remains slipping. We should make heroic effort—but not delude ourselves. We should be looking at diplomatic tracks to a bad end. We can do all manner of Lansdale things but this doesn't get to root of it." "Do we take diplomatic initiative?" he asked. "Do we risk escalation? Keep on until we get asked out?" Rusk responded: "We in Asia have made bricks without mortar for 25 years."

Ball said it was important to be aware of the assumption that if the U.S. were to escalate, this would strengthen political stability in South Vietnam. The President responded that he was skeptical of the view that escalation could help build morale in the South. Ball replied that escalation could bring "two-way activity," and that the U.S. must be ready to talk. "Larger responses are possible." "We all agree," McGeorge Bundy said. Rusk commented that reprisal against North Vietnam for specific incidents "was one thing," but that Phase II (sustained reprisal) "is quite another."

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[82] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy, handwritten notes of meeting of Jan. 6, 1965. These apparently are the only notes of that meeting.

The President asked, "What is it they want?" (He probably was referring to the U.S. Mission and to the South Vietnamese.) "How can we go down the reprisal road without being ready?" (For one thing, U.S. dependents had not yet been withdrawn.) He repeated that he had ". . . never thought reprisals would stabilize the government." (Six months later, he reportedly said the opposite.)[83] Moreover, "They're [reprisals] not sufficiently effective to bring you to conference table."

As the meeting ended the President stated: "Now we are going to have reprisals." These, he said, "may help to give more stability." U.S. dependents should begin to be withdrawn. "[I] hope you realize," he told the group, "this may cost you your vacations."

After another meeting of the same group the next day (January 7), the President replied to Taylor's cable of January 6:[84] "We are inclined to adopt a policy of prompt and clear reprisal, together with a readiness to start joint planning and execution on future military operations both within South Vietnam and against the North, but without present commitment as to the timing and scale of Phase II." Further decisions, the President said, would depend on "experience in reprisal actions, on joint efforts to achieve victories within South Vietnam, and on joint efforts to achieve political stability."

In his cable, the President proposed that the U.S. indicate publicly, preferably through background statements rather than formal announcements, that it was adopting a policy of reprisal. Prior to such reprisals, U.S. dependents would be evacuated.

With respect to the political situation in Saigon and the assignment of experienced Americans, the President told Taylor that he was considering sending someone to consult further with him on that aspect of the problem.

On January 7, at a conference of U.S. Ambassadors and military commanders in the Southeast Asia area, there was a review of the accomplishments of Phase I, and the conclusion of the group was that the military results were negligible and that Phase I operations should be intensified and extended for another 30 days. This, the group agreed, should be "an effective tonic" for the South Vietnamese, "particularly if accompanied by serious joint preparations and timely initiation of retaliatory and Phase II operations against the DRV." [85] After the 30 days, in keeping with the two-phase graduated pressure plan approved by the President on December 1, 1964, the group expressed the hope that Phase I would "phase appropriately" into Phase II.

Meanwhile, the political situation in Saigon appeared to have eased somewhat. On January 9, Khanh and the Armed Forces Council agreed to release the civilian members of the High National Council and to continue supporting the Huong government. Huong, for his part, said that he would appoint four of the Young Turks, including Thieu and Ky, to replace civilian ministers in his Cabinet, and that a constituent assembly would be formed to prepare a constitution, followed by the election of a civilian legislature and a Premier.

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[83] See p. 286 below.

[84] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Washington to Saigon 1419, Jan. 7, 1965.

[85] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 2086, Jan. 8, 1965.

On January 11, Taylor replied to the President's cable of January 7:[86]

> We have drawn much satisfaction from your message with its indication of general agreement with our thesis that the deteriorating situation here requires prompt action to pull the government together, to stimulate pacification and to raise the public morale. Also, I hope I am correct in assuming agreement that the action required includes a prompt passage into Phase II operations against the DRV as soon as possible and the adoption of a policy of prompt and clear reprisals for what has variously been termed "an unusual hostile act" of the VC or any major or spectacular VC action in SVN whether against U.S. personnel and installations or not.

The South Vietnamese Government was so weak, Taylor said, that it could not be expected to make much progress toward "real political stability and strength" in the near future, and if the U.S. was going to be able to take stronger military actions, "much common sense and great leniency" would be required in applying the performance criteria which had been established in December as preconditions for U.S. action. Indeed, in order to move into Phase II he thought the U.S. "may have to be satisfied with little more than the continued existence of a government in whose name we can act and to whose request for assistance we can respond." He recommended that if the Huong government was still in office after another month the U.S. should be "ready to embark on Phase II operations, if only for the pulmotor effect upon the internal situation in SVN."

With respect to U.S. dependents, Taylor recommended that some evacuation begin immediately, followed by complete evacuation after the first reprisal.

In the White House, McGeorge Bundy and Chester Cooper made a report to the President on January 13, one in a series of reports on "Political Developments in South Vietnam" which they made to the President during January, in which they said that a "detente" between Khanh and Taylor had been concluded and that the two men had "exchanged appropriate amenities." The Buddhists, however, were not satisfied with the situation and planned to continue agitating against Huong. In a handwritten note at the end of the report McGeorge Bundy said: "Mr. President. This report shows that the central problem is now the Buddhists. I am pressing for a new and more imaginative combined effort on that—with both responsiveness to their needs *and* firmness in their excesses. But it's easier to press than to produce on this." [87] (emphasis in original)

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[86] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Saigon to Washington 2116, Jan. 11, 1965.

[87] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam. In addition to the reports to the President on political developments during January, Cooper and Bundy sent him frequent summaries of U.S. Mission cables from Saigon. These are in the same location.

On January 14, McGeorge Bundy sent the President a memorandum pointing out that a reply was needed to Taylor's cable of January 11, and suggesting that because of preparations for the Presidential inauguration on January 20 the reply should be sent by the State Department "without committing you at this stage." After suggesting the text of the cable, Bundy added: "If the truce [between Khanh and Huong] . . . holds and this line of action seems reasonable to you, we would try to keep Vietnam quiet until after next Wednesday [January 20]." [88] The President approved Bundy's recommendations, and later that day (January 14), the State Department, using Bundy's proposal, replied that, based on further discussion with the President, Taylor was to begin the evacuation of dependents, and in the event of a "spectacular enemy action" he should recommend reprisal actions to Washington.[89] With respect to the beginning of Phase II, however, the cable stated: "It is not possible now for us to make any commitment on Phase II actions going beyond our guidance of December 3."

In a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy on January 15, 1965, "The Week That Was," Cooper and NSC staff member James C. Thomson, Jr., a Far East specialist, reported to Bundy that among other events of the previous week, "Cooper has been consulting with psychiatrists who have studied Buddhist psychology. Some insights on how to communicate with Buddhists might emerge." [90]

Attitudes in Congress and Among the Public

When the first session of the 89th Congress, elected in November 1964, met on January 5, 1965, it was clear that the President, whose highly successful campaign had helped to elect 38 additional Democrats in the House (the new House contained 295 Democrats and 140 Republicans) and 2 in the Senate, (68 Democrats and 32 Republicans) could count on Democratic support for his Vietnam policy. He also knew he could count on the Republicans, especially Senate Republican Leader Everett McKinley Dirksen (R/Ill.). Representatives Gerald R. Ford (R/Mich.), who had just defeated Charles A. Halleck (R/Ind.) for the post of House minority leader, and Melvin R. Laird (R/Wisc.), who also held a Republican leadership post, had tried to make Vietnam more of a partisan issue than had Dirksen, but they, too, supported a strong U.S. position on the issue of preventing a Communist takeover.

There was growing opposition, however, from several Democrats in the Senate, including the majority leader, Mike Mansfield, and the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, J. William Fulbright. Senator Richard Russell, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, was also against further U.S. involvement in the war, which he said publicly was "at best a stalemate that promises to be prolonged endlessly." [91] Russell is said to have believed, and to have told President Johnson in late 1964, that it was time to find a way out.[92]

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[88] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

[89] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Washington to Saigon 1477, Jan. 14, 1965.

[90] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

[91] *New York Times*, Jan. 12, 1965.

Opposition also was building among some of the junior Senate Democrats. During December 1964-January 1965, two of these, Senators Church and George S. McGovern (D/S. Dak.), who, like Mansfield and Fulbright, had voted for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution and had supported Johnson in the election, publicly expressed their concern about the course of events. Church advocated neutralization of Southeast Asia. He said he was opposed to extending the war to the North, and that although the U.S. had to honor its commitments he thought the war could only be won by the South Vietnamese. He hoped that the U.S. would not be forced to withdraw its support, but he thought that this was a possibility that should be faced.[93]

McGovern, who also opposed an extension of the war, said that the U.S. "can at most hold a finger in the dike until the South Vietnamese find themselves." He was against withdrawal, however, and thought that the U.S. should assist the South Vietnamese to apply greater pressure on the North through infiltration and subversion in order to force the North to negotiate. "The most viable and practical policy for the United States in Vietnam," he said, "is negotiations and a political settlement." [94]

McGovern's position reflected the viewpoint of General Lansdale and others of similar persuasion who had been involved with the CIA in Vietnam and who thought the conflict was primarily a "political war" and should be waged accordingly.[95]

In early January 1965, Vice President-elect Humphrey, (then a Democratic Senator from Minnesota and a member of the Foreign Relations Committee) arranged for Lansdale, with whom he had established a close relationship, and three others from the executive branch to meet with him, Chairman Fulbright, and John J. Sparkman (D/Ala.), ranking Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, to discuss Lansdale's point of view.[96] At the end of the meeting, Fulbright, Sparkman and Humphrey expressed support for Lansdale's position, and it was agreed that the three men, plus the ranking Republican on the committee, Bourke B. Hickenlooper (R/Iowa), should talk to the President. Humphrey, who was to be sworn in as Vice President two weeks later, said: "It is just a tragedy to think we are losing when we don't need to. I know some of the decisions . . . that are being made as we sit here and talk right now. I feel that maybe we are going to make some decisions that will be disastrous." The group subsequently saw the President, but Fulbright said later that they "got a very cool reception." [97]

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[92] For this and subsequent observations which will be cited as Bundy MS., CRS is indebted to William P. Bundy for permission to quote from his unpublished manuscript, written in 1970-72, dealing with key decisions concerning Southeast Asia in the period from early 1961 to early 1966. The quotation here is from ch. 20, p. 14. For further details on this and other reactions from Congress in early 1965, see pt. II of this study, pp. 394-405.

[93] *New York Times*, Dec. 27, 1964.

[94] *Congressional Record*, vol. 110 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off.), pp. 784-786 (hereafter referred to as *CR*).

[95] For more details, see pt. II of this study.

[96] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, unpublished transcript of the informal meeting on January 7, located in the committee's papers in the National Archives, RG 46.

[97] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, unpublished executive session transcript, May 19, 1965. There apparently are no notes of the meeting of Fulbright et al. with the President.

On January 8, 1965, the day after the Lansdale meeting, the subject of Vietnam was raised at an executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during a general briefing on the world situation by Secretary Rusk.[98] Chairman Fulbright told Rusk, "The only reason I and others have entertained the possibility . . . that maybe we might have to negotiate is simply it looks hopeless." Without revealing the meeting with Lansdale, he added: ". . . maybe we have thought of this entirely as a military operation or practically so, and that we have not been . . . willing and able . . . to help them generate a stable political organization which could then be the basis with which we work. . . ."

At the January 8 briefing, as well as another executive session with Rusk on January 15,[99] questions also were asked about consultation by the Executive with Congress prior to any major decisions to use U.S. forces in the war. The subject was raised by Fulbright, who, referring to Taylor's testimony to the committee on December 3, 1964 that the war would not be escalated by the U.S. unless and until there was greater governmental stability and strength in South Vietnam, asked Rusk whether this was still the policy of the administration. Rusk said that it was, adding: "I think I should say if the President should come to any other conclusions he would do so in consultation with the leadership of the Congress."

What about the argument that an attack on the North was necessary in order to bring about a stable government in the South? Fulbright asked, adding, "I don't think anything can justify the escalation of the war. . . ." Rusk replied, "Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that is something that the President and the leadership will talk to each other about." The exchange continued:

> The Chairman. Will we be told after the decision is made or before. Will we be invited to a meeting at the White House and told we have made up our mind tomorrow morning or in 20 minutes launch an attack.
>
> Secretary Rusk. We have never ourselves guaranteed North Vietnam as a safe haven for all those depredations which have been coming out of North Vietnam. There have been incidents down the coast and other things which have happened.
>
> The Chairman. I understand covert attacks have been made and we know about it. But I am talking about a rather major attack on North Vietnam by forces which are not just a hit and run.
>
> Secretary Rusk. I take it you are going beyond the possibility of retaliation at this point.
>
> The Chairman. Yes.
>
> Secretary Rusk. There was the Gulf of Tonkin.
>
> The Chairman. Yes.
>
> Secretary Rusk. That was retaliation.
>
> The Chairman. I just want to know what the idea is. I would hate for this decision to be made before the committee had the opportunity to consider it. . . . [Fulbright then mentioned the

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[98] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, unpublished executive session transcript, Jan. 8, 1965.

[99] *Ibid.*, Jan. 15, 1965.

> restraining role of Congress when the U.S. was considering military action at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 and in Laos in 1961.] In this case it is so important that I hope the administration won't make a decision of that nature. Before they make the decision, at least feeling the pulse of this committee. Do you think that would be a reasonable thing to expect?
>
> Secretary Rusk. I think Mr. Chairman, perhaps the reasonable thing on a matter of such importance is to report your remarks to the President.
>
> The Chairman. That is right.

In the meeting on January 15, Senator Sparkman asked about press reports that the U.S. was planning airstrikes on North Vietnam. Rusk replied: "I myself feel that strikes against the North are part of the problem on which the leadership and the President would be in consultation, because this would be a significant development of the situation." He added that he had told the President about the views expressed at the meeting on January 8.

Although there was some congressional interest in the Lansdale-CIA alternative approach to the war, as well as in negotiating a settlement which might obviate further U.S. involvement, and while there was little support for an expansion of U.S. military involvement, especially the use of ground forces, a report during January to William Bundy from one of his assistants on the state of opinion in Congress concluded that, ". . . there is generalized frustration with the situation and our involvement there. The great majority of Congressmen are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; their thoughts are fragmented and they are genuinely perplexed. In this state, they are willing to go along with the people who have the direct responsibility, the experts, in the Executive Branch."[100] Overall, the report stated,

> 1. We've got adequate support for the moment, largely passive but strong enough in a crunch to more than offset the opposition, and left largely alone it will stay this way.
>
> 2. There is in the Senate a group of fairly junior liberals growing in size and boldness who advocate finding a way to withdraw honorably and under the protection of international safeguards as the first order of business. [The report identified these as Church, McGovern, Albert A. Gore (D/Tenn.), Claiborne Pell (D/R.I.), and Gaylord Nelson (D/Wisc.).]
>
> 3. Without more active efforts to present and persuade on the Hill [Congress] in order actually to develop and solidify support, the passage of time and unhappy developments in SEA [Southeast Asia] could erode our position and enhance the persuasiveness and numbers of the opposition.

On January 22, 1965, Lyndon Johnson met from 10:00 a.m. to 12:40 p.m. with Democratic and Republican congressional leaders.[101] The President began by saying that he wanted ". . . to de-

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[100] Memorandum for William Bundy from his assistant, Jonathan Moore, "Congressional Attitudes on SVN," no date, but written in January 1965, and located in the Kennedy Library, Thomson Papers, in a folder covering the period 1-65 to 2-65. For more details on the report, see pt. II of this study, pp. 396-397.

[101] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, Files of McGeorge Bundy, Miscellaneous Meetings, notes of the meeting of Jan. 22, 1965, prepared by Bromley K. Smith, Executive Secretary of the

Continued

velop procedures which would make it possible for the Administration to think and plan with Congressional leaders. . . . The objective is to make possible an examination of our foreign policy and our defense structure by the Congressional leaders of both parties who are stewards of these policies. We do not separate Democrats and Republicans on Vietnam." His goal, he said, was "to try to unite the United States so that in the eyes of the world it is a united country."

The President said that the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Russell, and the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Fulbright, had not been invited to attend, ". . . because he wished to limit this conference to very few persons. At a later date it will be possible to enlarge the number."

Referring to Vietnam, which he said was "our worst problem . . . which he wrestles with all the time, day and night," the President told the leadership: "the basic fact is that we need to have in Saigon a stable government as a base for further actions."

Secretary Rusk was called upon to speak. ". . . our greatest problem in South Vietnam," he said, "is political instability. Our over-riding objective is to achieve political unity there." After commenting on the current political situation, he said that the U.S. was "keeping the political lines open" to the possibility of negotiations for a settlement based on either the Geneva Agreement of 1954 or that of 1962,[102] adding: "If the Communists will not negotiate with us on a return to the earlier agreements, we are in for a very difficult time in Southeast Asia."

Secretary McNamara told the group that infiltration from the North had increased substantially, and was running at about 10,000 a year. The strength of South Vietnamese forces was also growing, he added. Asked about the disparity between the numbers of forces on the two sides McNamara replied that, "on the basis of extensive experience we had concluded that a numerical advantage of 10 to 1 is required to win a guerrilla war." More South Vietnamese forces were needed to reach the 10 to 1 ratio, he said, but not more U.S. forces. The President interjected: ". . . we have decided that more U.S. forces are not needed in South Vietnam short of a decision to go to full-scale war." "The war," he added, "must be fought by the South Vietnamese. We cannot control everything that they do and we have to count on their fighting their war."

In response to a question as to why action was not being taken against North Vietnam, McNamara summarized for the group the covert operations being carried out against North Vietnam by South Vietnamese forces with U.S. assistance, including teams dropped in North Vietnam, attacks on the coast, and U.S. armed

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NSC. Present were the Speaker of the House, John W. McCormack (D/Mass.); the majority leaders of the House, Carl B. Albert (D/Okla.), and of the Senate, Mike Mansfield; the minority leaders of the House, Gerald Ford, and of the Senate, Everett Dirksen; majority and minority whips from the House, Hale Boggs (D/La.) and Leslie C. Arends (R/Ill.), and from the Senate, Russell B. Long (D/La.) and Thomas H. Kuchel (R/Calif.); and several others who also held leadership posts: Republican Melvin Laird from the House, and Republicans George D. Aiken (Vt.) and Leverett Saltonstall (Mass.) and Democrat George A. Smathers (Fla.) from the Senate. Also attending were Vice President Humphrey, Rusk and McNamara, CIA Director McCone, McGeorge Bundy, Lawrence F. O'Brien, Presidential Special Assistant for Congressional Liaison, and, for part of the meeting, White House Special Assistants Horace Busby, S. Douglass Cater, Jr., Bill Moyers, Jack J. Valenti and Presidential Press Secretary George E. Reedy, Jr.

[102] For information on these agreements see pts. I and II of this study.

reconnaissance flights in Laos under Operation BARREL ROLL, initiated in December 1964 as a part of Phase I.

Although there were no expressions of dissent from the leaders, there was only one direct statement of support. This came from the new House minority leader, Gerald Ford, who said he agreed with U.S. policy in Vietnam, and that he believed the opposition party would cooperate and would not take positions "harmful to the national interest."

That afternoon, the President met from 5:40 p.m. to 7:25 p.m. with the Democratic chairmen of Senate committees. (He had met the day before with all of the Democratic chairmen of the committees of the House, but Vietnam was not discussed.) The President called on each chairman to report on the timetable for the major legislation which would be handled by that committee, following which he reviewed at length the efforts he was making to control government costs. More than half of the meeting, however, was taken up by a discussion of Vietnam led by Fulbright. The response of the President was, ". . . that he agreed totally with everything he [Fulbright] had said and with his review of all the problems but that with all that, no one in the room had come up with an answer to the problem." [103]

During this period, studies of public opinion indicated that the public, like the Congress, was divided with respect to U.S. policy in Vietnam. These were the results of a Gallup Poll released on January 31, 1965:[104]

> *"Some people think we should not have become involved with our military forces in Southeast Asia, while others think we should have. What is your opinion?"*

	Percent
U.S. should have	50
Should not have	28
No opinion	22

A Louis Harris survey at about the same time reported the following division of opinion:[105]

> *"Which of these courses do you favor for the U.S. in Vietnam: Carry the war into North Vietnam, at the risk of bringing Red China into the war; negotiate a settlement with the Communists and get out now; or continue to hold the line there to prevent the Communists from taking over South Vietnam?"*

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[103] Johnson Library, Diary Backup for Jan. 22, 1965, notes dictated to the President's secretary, Juanita Roberts, by Larry O'Brien and by Deputy Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who attended the meeting. These, which are apparently the only notes of the meeting, do not provide further details on the discussion of Vietnam.

[104] George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll, Public Opinion 1935-1971*, vol. 3, 1959-1971 (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 1921. In the same poll, 81 percent approved of having the President request a meeting with leaders of Southeast Asia and China to negotiate a peace treaty, 11 percent were opposed and 8 percent had no opinion.

[105] See the *Washington Post*, Feb. 22, 1965.

[In Percent]

	January 1965	*November 1964*
Hold the line	40	40
Negotiate and get out	23	20
Carry fighting to North Vietnam	17	20
Not sure	20	20

In December 1964, the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, a non-profit organization of prominent Americans, surveyed the views on Vietnam of the members of its affiliated committees on foreign relations in 33 cities. Of the 600 "leading citizens" who responded to a questionnaire, (this was not a scientific sampling, and there are no figures on the total number of those who received the questionnaire), eight out of ten approved the existing U.S. role in Vietnam, and three out of four agreed with the following statement of U.S. interests:[106]

(a) South Vietnam is the key to preservation of a non-Communist Southeast Asia; the latter is of great strategic significance in the forward defense of the United States and must therefore be denied to the Communists;

(b) South Vietnam is a test case of the effectiveness of the "wars of national liberation" advocated chiefly by the Chinese Communists, and Communist success there would greatly enhance the danger of guerrilla wars in all of the developing countries;

(c) As a free world leader the United States must assist other people who seek to preserve their independence.

More than half approved of U.S. assistance to Vietnam, "even if substantially greater resources should be required." Seventeen percent took the position that the U.S. "should do whatever may be necessary, regardless of the cost in men, money and materiel." (It is not clear whether this included military activities.) Fifteen percent thought that, "Too much is already being invested in holding on to South Vietnam in comparison to its importance to the United States interest."

When the community leaders were asked to propose alternatives to U.S. policy, however, their answers revealed a division of opinion similar to that in Congress and the general public. Of those who replied (56 percent of the 600), 20 percent advocated military disengagement but not necessarily total withdrawal, whereas 24 percent recommended an expansion of the war, 2 percent advocated a brief and limited military effort to strengthen the U.S. negotiating position, 4 percent took an either/or position (either go in to win or get out), and 6 percent gave a variety of responses.

When the leaders—almost two-thirds of whom also felt that U.S. nonmilitary programs were failing—were asked what the role of the U.S. should be with respect to intervening in South Vietnamese politics, more than half indicated a preference for supplying advisers and assistance but leaving decisions and operations to the Vietnamese. Thirty-six percent, however, agreed with the statement that the U.S. "should intervene in South Vietnamese politics as necessary to assure political, economic and social reforms."

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[106] Rolland H. Bushner (ed.), *American Dilemma in Viet-Nam*, A Report on the Views of Leading Citizens in Thirty-Three Cities (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1965), p. 1.

CHAPTER 2

THE DECISION TO BEGIN THE AIR WAR AND TO SEND THE FIRST U.S. GROUND FORCES TO VIETNAM

On January 26, 1965 (the 27th in Saigon), four days after President Johnson had stressed the importance of Vietnamese political stability in his meeting with congressional leaders, there was another change of government in Saigon as the Armed Forces Council, led by Gen. Nguyen Khanh and his supporters, voted to remove Premier Tran Van Huong. Nguyen Xuan Oanh, a civilian with strong ties to the U.S., became Acting Premier and Phan Khac Suu was made Acting Chief of State.[1]

A few days earlier, prominent Buddhists, including one of their principal leaders, Thich Tri Quang,[2] began a hunger strike. This was followed by student demonstrations in several cities and the sacking and burning of the U.S. Information Agency Center in Hue and the sacking of the Center in Saigon. The CIA reported on January 21 that Tri Quang rejected both Khanh and Huong and supported the Young Turks (especially Gen. Nguyen Chanh Thi and Air Vice Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky), on the grounds that they had no ideology and therefore could be better controlled by the Buddhists. Tri Quang was also said to have commented: "We have to go along with the Americans in the future." [3]

On January 26, the day before the change of government, Chester Cooper sent a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy, "Vietnam—The Present State of Play," in which he summarized the situation and concluded by saying that the U.S. had two broad options:[4]

> A. Let the situation continue to slip and slide, use our presently limited assets to influence, guide and protest, and hope that the forces involved will reach some *modus vivendi.*
>
> B. Take a more active role in a last effort to get a fix that will last at least until the National Assembly meets in March

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[1] Nguyen Xuan Oanh, called "Jack Owen" by the Americans, was an economist who took his graduate work at Harvard University, had worked for the U.S. Government, and was considered very pro-American. He had been Minister of Finance in Khanh's Cabinet. Phan Khac Suu had been imprisoned for four years by the French, after which he served in the Cabinet of Emperor Bao Dai as well as that of Diem. In 1960, he was one of 18 signers of the Caravelle Manifesto which appealed to Diem to correct abuses of his administration. (See pt. II, pp. 339-340, of this study.) For this, and allegedly for supporting the 1960 attempted coup against Diem, he was arrested and was jailed until Diem was deposed.

[2] Thich Tri Quang was secretary general of the High Council of the United Buddhist Association and president of the Association of Buddhist Monks in Central Vietnam and of the General Association of Buddhist Monks.

[3] U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Central File, CIA Intelligence Information Cable, Jan. 21, 1965, TDCS-314/00838 65, Subject: "Thich Tri Quang's Campaign to Bring Down the Tran Van Huong Government." In the Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, there are several memoranda of conversations with Tri Quang conducted during January 1965 by U.S. Mission personnel.

[4] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

(at which time Huong can be replaced with some measure of legality).

Cooper said he favored the latter course "in full recognition that it is easier said than done and that it may mean difficulties with Taylor, State and sundry others."

Bundy sent Cooper's memorandum to the President, and in an accompanying memorandum he commented: "It is certainly true that if Huong goes now, the Buddhists will be more irresponsible than ever. On the other hand, it is equally clear that Huong himself does not have the authority to govern without very heavy and visible U.S. support."

Bundy suggested "one more effort to talk sense to the Buddhists" through an American they could trust. "Their particular hero," he said, "is Cabot Lodge, but the dangers of sending him are obvious. The only way it could be done is on the basis of a direct invitation from Max Taylor. . . . I feel sure myself that in this context Lodge would be a team player and I would be glad to know your own feelings about this."

Apparently the President agreed that Taylor's opinion should be sought, and a cable was sent to him by William Bundy suggesting that Lodge might talk with the Buddhists.[5] Taylor replied on January 28 that he had "considerable reservations" about having Lodge talk to the Buddhists. He said it would ". . . greatly enhance their prestige, already inflated by their victory over Huong and the USG," and that it might also ". . . raise suspicions in a highly suspicious country that the U.S. is trafficking with neutralists." [6]

On January 26, after sending Cooper's memorandum to the President and several hours before the change of government occurred, McGeorge Bundy sent the President a CIA memorandum predicting that it was imminent. He said it was his judgment that "a change of government could provide the framework for a repair of our relations with these people," and that whatever happened, "there is strong feeling which I share that this back and forth in the government in Saigon is a symptom, not a root cause of the problem." [7]

In the State Department, there was some support for the position of Taylor and U. Alexis Johnson that Khanh should be replaced, preferably by First Deputy Premier Nguyen Luu Vien. On January 26, the day of the coup, U. Alexis Johnson sent a cable to the State Department stating that Khanh was planning, in concert with the Buddhists, to overthrow Huong and establish a government that would negotiate with the Communists.[8] William Bundy's office in the State Department sent an immediate reply agreeing that the evidence supported Johnson's theory that there was an alliance between Khanh and Buddhist leaders to depose Huong and replace him with a regime which would be "weaker and more inclined towards negotiations with the Communists." [9] There were three questions: (a) whether there was a combination of military officers "capable of removing Khanh and neutralizing the current Buddhist effort by strong action"; (b) whether support could be gained for Huong from the Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Dai Viet[10] and non-Institute Buddhists; (c) whether General Tran Thien Khiem, (South Vietnam's Ambassador to the U.S.)[11] could play a useful role in developing the necessary military combination. If the answers to (a) and (b) were affirmative, the cable said, ". . . we would be inclined to let it be known discretely but immediately to the appropriate military officers individually that Khanh and the Institute are skating on thin ice in their undercutting of the lawful government and we should not be sorry to see them fall through."

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[5] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Washington to Saigon 1549, Jan. 26, 1965.

[6] Same location, Saigon to Washington 2334, Jan. 28, 1965.

[7] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

[8] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 2295, Jan. 26, 1965.

[9] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Washington to Saigon 1539, Jan. 26, 1965. See also Kahin, *Intervention*, pp. 294-296, who concludes that Khanh had, indeed, initiated contacts with the National Liberation Front.

McGeorge Bundy and McNamara Recommend Action

Toward the end of January, before the change of government occurred, McGeorge Bundy and McNamara decided that stronger action was necessary to prevent a defeat in Vietnam. They asked to have a meeting with the President on January 27, and in a memorandum to the President on the morning of the meeting Bundy said that he and McNamara were requesting the meeting "in order to have a very private discussion of the basic situation in Vietnam." "A topic of this magnitude," he added, "can only be opened for initial discussion this morning, but McNamara and I have reached the point where our obligations to you simply do not permit us to administer our present directives in silence and let you think we see real hope in them."

In an interview some years later, McGeorge Bundy said that a memorandum of this nature was an "unusual thing" on the part of a Presidential assistant, but that the President ". . . really didn't want to have to decide. It appeared to us that he was coming to a decision. No decision was a decision, a decision to lose." "I think our feeling was," Bundy said, "that it was our business, as people to whom he had repeatedly said and said publicly he wasn't about to lose the Vietnam War or get out of it. As we saw it, the policy wasn't working." [12]

This is the text of McGeorge Bundy's memorandum to the President on January 27, 1965, which became known as the "Fork in the Y Memo":[13]

> What we [McGeorge Bundy and McNamara] want to say to you is that both of us are now pretty well convinced that our current policy can lead only to disastrous defeat. What we are doing now, essentially, is to wait and hope for a stable government. Our December directives make it very plain that wider

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[10] The Cao Dai and Hoa Hao were strong political sects in South Vietnam. The Dai Viets (Dai Viet Quoc Gia Lien Minh—Nationalist Party of Greater Vietnam) was a political party which earlier had existed in both the North and the South and still had its "northern" and "southern" wings in South Vietnam.

[11] Gen. Tran Thien Khiem had been an ally of Diem in earlier years but subsequently, while serving as army chief of staff, was one of the principals in the 1963 coup against Diem. In January 1964, he collaborated with Khanh in removing the head of the ruling junta, Gen. Duong Van Minh, after which he became Minister of Defense. In August 1964, he became a member of the triumvirate chosen to govern the country. In September, however, he collaborated with others seeking to overthrow Khanh, and was then sent by Khanh to Washington as the South Vietnamese Ambassador to the United States.

[12] CRS Interview with McGeorge Bundy, Jan. 8, 1979.

[13] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

action against the Communists will not take place unless we can get such a government. In the last six weeks that effort has been unsuccessful, and Bob and I are persuaded that there is no real hope of success in this area unless and until our own policy and priorities change.

The underlying difficulties in Saigon arise from the spreading conviction there that the future is without hope for anti-Communists. More and more the good men are covering their flanks and avoiding executive responsibility for firm anti-Communist policy. Our best friends have been somewhat discouraged by our own inactivity in the face of major attacks on our own installations. The Vietnamese know just as well as we do that the Viet Cong are gaining in the countryside. Meanwhile, they see the enormous power of the United States withheld, and they get little sense of firm and active U.S. policy. They feel that we are unwilling to take serious risks. In one sense, all of this is outrageous, in the light of all that we have done and all that we are ready to do if they will only pull up their socks. But it is a fact—or at least so McNamara and I now think.

The uncertainty and lack of direction which pervade the Vietnamese authorities are also increasingly visible among our own people, even the most loyal and determined. Overtones of this sentiment appear in our cables from Saigon, and one can feel them also among our most loyal staff officers here in Washington. The basic directive says that we will not go further until there is a stable government, and no one has much hope that there is going to be a stable government while we sit still. The result is that we are pinned into a policy of first aid to squabbling politicos and passive reaction to events we do not try to control. Or so it seems.

Bob and I believe that the worst course of action is to continue in this essentially passive role which can only lead to eventual defeat and an invitation to get out in humiliating circumstances.

We see two alternatives. The *first* is to use our military power in the Far East and to force a change of Communist policy. The *second* is to deploy all our resources along a track of negotiation, aimed at salvaging what little can be preserved with no major addition to our present military risks. Bob and I tend to favor the first course, but we believe that both should be carefully studied and that alternative programs should be argued out before you.

Both of us understand the very grave questions presented by any decision of this sort. We both recognize that the ultimate responsibility is not ours. Both of us have fully supported your unwillingness, in earlier months, to move out of the middle course. We both agree that every effort should still be made to improve our operations on the ground and to prop up the authorities in South Vietnam as best we can. But we are both convinced that none of this is enough, and that the time has come for harder choices.

You should know that Dean Rusk does not agree with us. He does not quarrel with our assertion that things are going very

> badly and that the situation is unraveling. He does not assert that this deterioration can be stopped. What he does say is that the consequences of both escalation and withdrawal are so bad that we simply must find a way of making our present policy work. This would be good if it was possible. Bob and I do not think it is.

According to William Bundy, except for Rusk, that memorandum "summed up all the feelings of all of us at that moment." [14]

By January 1965, William Bundy said later, there were "only two choices: to move toward withdrawal or to do a lot more, both for its military impact and, at the outset, to prevent a collapse of South Vietnamese morale and will to continue." [15] The latter course, while it "ran against the grain of every desire of the President and his advisers," was the only way of preventing the North Vietnamese, who were "moving for the kill," from taking South Vietnam.

William Bundy explained why U.S. policymakers felt the need to defend South Vietnam:[16] "On the one hand," he said, "the bedrock elements still remained: a strong Chinese Communist and North Vietnamese threat to Southeast Asia, a crucial link between the defense of South Viet-Nam and the realization of that threat, and the validity of non-Communist nationalism, whatever its imperfections, in South Viet-Nam and in the other nations of Southeast Asia." He continued:

> Moreover, the wider implications for our commitments elsewhere appeared no less valid than they had ever been. Viet-Nam still constituted a major, perhaps even a decisive, test case of whether the Communist strategy of "wars of national liberation" or "people's wars" could be met and countered even in the extraordinarily difficult circumstances of South Viet-Nam. Then as now, it has been, I think, rightly judged that a success for Hanoi in South Viet-Nam could only encourage the use of this technique by Hanoi, and over time by the Communist Chinese, and might well have the effect of drawing the Soviets into competition with Peking and Hanoi and away from the otherwise promising trends that have developed in Soviet policy in the past 10 years.
>
> Finally, it was judged from the outset that stronger action by us in Viet-Nam would not operate to bring the Soviet Union and Communist China closer together and that the possibility of major Chinese Communist intervention could be kept to a minimum so long as we made it clear at all times, both by word and deed, that our objective was confined solely to freeing South Viet-Nam from external interference and that we did not threaten Communist China but rather looked to the ul-

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[14] Bundy MS., ch. 22, p. 4.

[15] William P. Bundy, "The Path to Viet-Nam: A Lesson in Involvement," address to the annual congress of the National Student Association, Aug. 15, 1967, printed in the *Department of State Bulletin,* Sept. 4, 1967, and republished, with minor changes, under the title, "The Path to Vietnam: Ten Decisions," *Orbis,* 11 (Fall 1967), pp. 647-663.

[16] *Ibid.*

timate hope of what the Manila Declaration of last fall, called "reconciliation and peace throughout Asia." [17]

On the other hand, it was recognized from the outset that the taking of these new major military measures involved heavy costs and hazards. The South Vietnamese still had to play the crucial role in military security and, above all, in political and economic development and stability. A greater American role was bound to complicate South Vietnamese evolution. It was bound to increase the scale of the war and to cost significantly in lives and very heavily in resources. Even though the casualties and damage of the war remain far below what was suffered in Korea, war is never anything but ugly and brutal.

The meeting of McGeorge Bundy and McNamara with the President on January 27, 1965, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. was also attended by Rusk and Ball.[18] The President's close friend and adviser, Abe Fortas, a Washington lawyer, may also have been present. The President apparently agreed with Bundy and McNamara that the time had come for the U.S. to assume a more active role in Vietnam, and, as Bundy and McNamara had recommended, to use American power to "force a change of Communist policy." Although there are no official notes of the meeting, handwritten notes by McGeorge Bundy indicate that the President wanted U.S. dependents removed, and then, quoting the President, " 'stable government or no stable government, we'll do what we ought to do.' *I'm prepared to do that. We will move strongly. Khanh is our boy.*"[19] (emphases in original)

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[17] The Manila Declaration of Goals of Freedom, issued on Oct. 25, 1966 at the end of a Conference attended by the U.S., South Vietnam, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines, was as follows (*Public Papers of the Presidents*, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966, pp. 1259, 1265):

"We, the seven nations gathered in Manila, declare our unity, our resolve, and our purpose in seeking together the goals of freedom in Vietnam and in the Asian and Pacific areas. They are:

"1. To be free from aggression.

"2. To conquer hunger, illiteracy, and disease.

"3. To build a region of security, order, and progress.

"4. To seek reconciliation and peace throughout Asia and the Pacific."

This was the explanation of the fourth point: "We do not threaten the sovereignty or territorial integrity of our neighbors, whatever their ideological alignment. We ask only that this be reciprocated. The quarrels and ambitions of ideology and the painful fruitions arising from national fears and grievances should belong to the past. Aggression rooted in them must not succeed. We shall play our full part in creating an environment in which reconciliation becomes possible, for in the modern world men and nations have no choice but to learn to live together as brothers."

[18] Before attending the meeting with the President, McNamara met early that morning with McNaughton to discuss a draft memorandum on the situation. (For the text of McNaughton's draft see *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 686-687.) In the draft, McNaughton, who said that the U.S. objective was "not to 'help friend' but to contain China," argued that the situation was continuing to deteriorate, and that, "Loss in South Vietnam would merely move the conflict to Malaysia or Thailand. U.S. won't repeat South Vietnam there! Continue with side effects of accommodations elsewhere in Asia."

There were three options for the U.S., McNaughton said:

"(a) Strike the DRV;

"(b) 'Negotiate'; or

"(c) Keep plugging."

They discussed the options. With respect to option (c), McNamara said he thought that the U.S. was "drifting."

As for option (b), McNaughton commented that "Negotiations, with so few counters is no way to improve the actual situation; it might serve to diffuse and confuse to some extent the psychological impact of loss." That, McNamara replied, would be "better than drifting."

Option (a), striking the DRV, might improve the situation McNaughton said, "but probably won't." McNamara disagreed. He said it would improve the situation, but there would be the risk that the American public "will not support a squeeze unless results show soon."

Even though McNaughton did not think that striking the North would improve the situation, he recommended that it be done, beginning with tit-for-tat reprisals. McNamara's response was that this would be "too narrow." The U.S., he said, should begin by using 34-A operations and DE SOTO patrols, as well as releasing information on North Vietnamese infiltration, "and feel way from there."

McNaughton said that the U.S. should "keep plugging" in any event, and in his memorandum he suggested these immediate actions:

"(a) Ride along with the new government, make no adverse comments;

"(b) Continue vigorous advisory effort, but add no more U.S. men. *RSM* [McNamara] *comment:* 'They are in for 6500 more!';

"(c) Get dependents out;

"(d) Authorize Westmoreland to use jets. *RSM comment:* Yes, in emergencies in South Vietnam;

"(e) React promptly and firmly to next reprisal opportunity;

"(f) Start re-educating U.S. public that Southeast Asia confrontation will last years."

As had been recommended earlier, the President also approved a visit to South Vietnam by McGeorge Bundy to survey the situation.[20] Chester Cooper, one of Bundy's deputies at the time, said later that the President had already made up his mind about what he was going to do:[21]

> . . . in February, 1965, as part of Johnson's effort to demonstrate he was considering all the options, he sent Bundy, myself and McNaughton over to Saigon for a first-hand look. The problem was that Johnson had already made up his mind. For all practical purposes he had dismissed the option of deescalating and getting out, but he didn't want to say that he had, and so the rationale for this trip was that this was going to be decisive—Bundy, after all, had never been there. On the basis of this, he would then decide what he was going to do on Vietnam. But, in point of fact, he damn well had decided already what he was going to do.

At the meeting, the President also accepted the recommendation of his advisers for a DE SOTO patrol on February 3 in the Gulf of Tonkin along the coast of North Vietnam, the first since September 1964.[22] Although it was to be an intelligence-gathering mission, its primary objective was to demonstrate U.S. determination to both the South and the North Vietnamese, and to provide an opportunity for a North Vietnamese attack which could then serve as the justification for a U.S. reprisal. Unlike the previous incidents in the Gulf of Tonkin in August 1964, when the patrol had come to within three nautical miles of the North Vietnamese coast during a period when 34-A raids were taking place in the same area, the February 1965 patrol was to remain 30 nautical miles from the coast and there were to be no 34-A raids during the 48 hours before and after the patrol. These restrictions, while reducing somewhat the chances that the North Vietnamese would attack the patrol, were also calculated to avoid the kind of criticism, congressional and otherwise, that had occurred after the August 1964 incidents, and thereby to strengthen the U.S. case for retaliation.

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[19] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy, handwritten notes of meeting of January 27. Words which appear here in single quotation marks within quotation marks appear in Bundy's notes in quotation marks.

[20] In a memorandum to the President transmitting the draft of a cable to Taylor informing him of the trip, McGeorge Bundy said: "This is as good a moment as any to say how much Bob and I valued your comments this morning in response to our memo, and how proud I am that you are willing to entrust this particular mission to me." Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[21] CRS Interview with Chester Cooper, Apr. 10, 1979.

[22] McGeorge Bundy's notes of the meeting, the only source of this piece of information, state: "The Gulf of Tonkin? Do it—*a week from now.*" (emphasis in original)

After he was informed that a new DE SOTO patrol had been approved, Taylor replied:[23]

> From the point of view of the deteriorating situation in SVN, a DRV attack on a DE SOTO patrol followed by immediate strong and effective U.S. retaliation would offer a priceless advantage to our cause here. I hope that in approving the February 3 mission that this thought is uppermost in our minds and that there is no doubt as to the decision which will follow a DRV act of provocation.

The order for the February 3 patrol was sent to CINCPAC by the JCS on January 28, the day after McGeorge Bundy and McNamara met at the White House with the President. U.S. forces were immediately put on a high alert status to carry out any reprisal raid that might be ordered after a Communist attack on the patrol, or after any other Communist attack in response to which reprisal was ordered. The code name was FLAMING DART.

On February 1, McGeorge Bundy cabled Taylor that the DE SOTO patrol for February 3 would be rescheduled for February 7, after the Tet holidays (the Vietnamese new year),[24] but when the Russians announced on January 31 that Premier Aleksei Kosygin would visit Hanoi at about the same time that the Bundy group would be in Saigon, the patrol was cancelled on February 4 because of its possible effect on U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations. This reflected a judgment that the Russians might have a moderating influence on the North Vietnamese, and could play a key role in persuading them to settle the war on terms that would enable the U.S. to justify withdrawal.[25]

When he received word of the Bundy visit, Taylor cabled Washington that it should be postponed until the composition of the new government had been announced.[26] Bundy replied on January 28: "President sees force of your argument that my visit should not come when there is no government to talk with. On the other hand, it looks to us as if General Khanh for better or for worse is the principal present power. We see no early prospect of solid and stable administration, no matter what happens in the next few days." Bundy told Taylor that he should seek Khanh's commitment to carry on the war and should assure Khanh that the U.S. was equally determined to help. "You could then make use of plan for DE SOTO patrol next week as indication our position." [27]

In another cable to Taylor on January 30, Bundy suggested subjects for discussion during his visit.[28] The first was, "How is the struggle against the Viet Cong going?" "Washington," he said, "is assuming that the course of this contest has been generally unfavorable for more than a year and that in the absence of major changes it is likely to get worse." Another major question was the prospect for a stable government. "Present directions," the cable said, "make such a government an essential prerequisite for important additional U.S. major actions, but we now wonder whether this requirement is either realistic or necessary. If not, then we need to consider what actions are possible both within SVN and against the North while GVN lacks desired stability. We also need to consider what positive or negative effect additional U.S. action may have on this problem. Sample questions are, whether Phase II actions [this is in reference to the second phase of the graduated pressure plan approved by the President in early December 1964] could be used to strengthen GVN and whether U.S. could organize its own efforts at all levels within SVN detached from political problems of central government."

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[23] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 2359, Jan. 31, 1965.

[24] Johnson Library, NSF International Meetings and Travel File, Washington to Saigon 1581, Feb. 1, 1965.

[25] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 298-302.

[26] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 2334, Jan. 28, 1965.

[27] Johnson Library, NSF International Meetings and Travel File, Washington to Saigon 1559, Jan. 28, 1965.

[28] Same location, Washington to Saigon 1570, Jan. 30 1965.

At a meeting of the National Security Council on February 1, 1965, the President announced that Bundy would be going to Saigon, and Bundy commented: "The trip will be as low-key as possible. . . . No great new decisions are expected to result." [29]

On the evening of February 2, 1965, McGeorge Bundy, McNaughton, Cooper, Unger (William Bundy's deputy and Director of the Vietnam Task Force), and Gen. Andrew J. Goodpaster, assistant to the Chairman of the JCS, left for Vietnam.[30]

In a cable to Washington on February 3, Taylor again reported his concern about Khanh.[31] He said that a ranking military officer had told U. Alexis Johnson that Khanh was in touch with the Communists, and that he was planning, in alliance with the Buddhists, to move toward neutralism.

In another cable later that day (February 3), Taylor reported that Khanh, ". . . despite his intelligence and industry, has not in this entire time [since assuming power in January 1964] managed to construct any base of popular support. . . . He appears to be motivated almost exclusively by personal ambition and subordinates all other considerations to this. He has demonstrated no 'staying power' once placed in positions of trust and prime responsibility despite unqualified US support." [32]

In still another cable to Washington later that day, Taylor reported that Ky had confirmed the report earlier that day of Khanh's alliance with the Buddhists, and that the U.S. Mission was contacting Ky again to tell him that the U.S. shared his concern and that of his colleagues about what Khanh might do, and that the U.S. was not "propping up General Khanh or backing him in any fashion." [33]

This was followed by yet a fourth cable to Washington on February 3 in which Taylor said that with Khanh in power, "We foresee a likely trend toward neutralism and anti-Americanism." [34] "I can see no good coming out of a Khanh government," he added, "not even that minimum stability which would allow us to continue the struggle against the Viet Cong and Hanoi at present levels of success. The probable outcomes as we foresee them would be either civil disturbance approaching anarchy or a neutralist Khanh in a Sihanouk role. Both are unacceptable solutions from the point of view of the U.S." "I feel," Taylor said, "that the U.S. cannot win with Khanh as Chief of State and that every possible action should be taken to prevent his accession to power." [35] To forestall this, Taylor recommended that the U.S. "communicate a timely message to the generals to persuade them to withhold a vote of confidence for Khanh and to prevent his coming to power." He said he would talk to McGeorge Bundy about the idea.

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[29] Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings File, Summary Notes of 544th NSC Meeting, Feb. 1, 1965.

[30] In the Johnson Library, NSF International Meetings and Travel File, there is a box of materials on the Bundy trip.

[31] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 2382, Feb. 3, 1965.

[32] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 2386, Feb. 3, 1965.

[33] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 2389, Feb. 3, 1965.

[34] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 2391, Feb. 3, 1965.

The State Department replied on February 3 that they agreed with Taylor's decision to tell the military that the U.S. did not support Khanh.[36] "At the same time," the cable said, "we are deeply concerned, as we are sure you are too, at US hand showing too strongly in any outcome." For this reason, the cable suggested that the Mission might take the position that it was not supporting any particular individual but expected the Vietnamese to work out the problem.

On February 4, Taylor cabled Washington that other generals were being contacted, and that, "I can well visualize necessity at some time of using full U.S. leverage to induce our Vietnamese friends to get Khanh out of position of commander in chief." [37]

Meanwhile McGeorge Bundy had arrived in Saigon and in a "secure" telephone conversation with his brother, William Bundy, on February 4, he said he assumed that his role was to "direct attention to the development of preferences," and that he should refrain from "active indication of positive US preferences." [38] He added that there was no indication as to how the problem with Khanh would be resolved, and "no agreed opinion that I can solicit on our side as to what the preferred solution is."

William Bundy agreed that McGeorge Bundy should not take an active role during his visit, and told him: ". . . we are very concerned about any appearance of an active US political role. . . . I should think we had to see how the situation settled down before any of us could be sure how we would like to use US influence and whether we would want to take any risks of having our hands show very clearly." McGeorge Bundy replied: "That is exactly the way we see it here."

The next day (February 5), McGeorge Bundy and Taylor accompanied by Westmoreland, Goodpaster, and McNaughton, met with Khanh for an hour and a half, during which Bundy "explained determination of President, USG, and American people to support SVN as long as necessary and in any way necessary. . . ." [39]

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[35] This comment was based on the possibility that Khanh once again was seeking to become President, with expanded power, as he had in August of 1964.

[36] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Washington to Saigon 1601, Feb. 3, 1965.

[37] Quoted by Kahin, *Intervention*, p. 298.

[38] Johnson Library, NSF International Meetings and Travel File, Transcript of conversation between William Bundy and McGeorge Bundy over secure telephone line, Feb. 4, 1965.

[39] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 2409, Feb. 6, 1965.

Khanh then asked about "going north," and about possible U.S. assistance in "liberating the North." Bundy replied that it was U.S. policy to win the war in the South, not to liberate the North. The U.S., he said, would be willing to bring pressure on the North, "but this would be feasible only if it involved frank and loyal partnership with a stable and reasonably popular GVN." He emphasized that the U.S. was there to assist the South Vietnamese, but that the "main burden inevitably falls on Vietnamese, who must learn to work together more cohesively and effectively."

The Buddhist "problem," of course, was of particular interest to Bundy and his group. Before leaving for Vietnam they had received a copy of a Special National Intelligence Estimate which had been requested by the Vietnam Task Force, and which said, among other things:[40]

> South Vietnam is in the midst of a social and political revolution. In the political vacuum occasioned by French departure, power was initially assumed by an elite of French-educated and predominantly Catholic mandarin types, of whom Ngo Dinh Diem was both symbol and archetype. Power is now passing to a much more "Vietnamese," militantly nationalistic and potentially xenophobic group of which the political [Buddhist] bonzes and the military Young Turks are prime examples. This revolution is a formless thing, uncontrolled, and in many ways as genuinely spontaneous as such movements ever can be. It is something quite apart from the VC-directed insurgency, though the Communists are obviously exploiting it. This shift in the alignment of fundamental political forces is responsible for much of the turbulence we are witnessing—and will continue to witness—on the urban scene, particularly since this process involves the striking of new power balances in the midst of

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[40] Johnson Library, NSF International Meetings and Travel File, SNIE 53-65, "Short-Term Prospects in South Vietnam," draft of Jan. 29, 1965.

Another intelligence estimate, SNIE 10-65, "Communist Military Capabilities and Near Term Intentions in Laos and South Vietnam," Feb. 3, 1965, same location, concluded that while the military capabilities of Communist forces in South Vietnam had been steadily improving, the Communists had not engaged South Vietnamese regular forces except where they outnumbered them, and were not expected to do so during the next four or five months. Likewise, recent deployments of some North Vietnamese forces into Laos and increased air defense capability in North Vietnam were seen as defensive responses to U.S. pressures in Laos and the threat of possible U.S. attacks on North Vietnam rather than as offensive moves. The North Vietnamese and Chinese were apprehensive about the possibility of U.S. attacks on North Vietnam, but probably less so than in the fall of 1964 after U.S. bombing following the Gulf of Tonkin incidents. Possible reasons were the suspension by the U.S. DE SOTO patrols and decisions not to retaliate for the bombings at Bien Hoa in November 1964 and in Saigon in December. Also, according to SNIE 10-65, "Influential voices in the US opposing extension of the war may have persuaded the Communists that the US is not disposed to undertake major escalation."

SNIE 10-65 also commented on the role of the Soviet Union, pointing out that the Russians were apparently seeking to strengthen their ties with the North Vietnamese and to deter the U.S. from further expansion of its activities. Thus, the Russians would probably increase their aid, but they would also ". . . almost certainly hope that North Vietnam avoids actions which might provoke US reprisals and produce further escalation." The SNIE concluded: ". . . we doubt that the Soviets will undertake the military defense of the DRV or very high risks to protect it."

As for future contingencies, SNIE 10-65 concluded that North Vietnamese and Laotian Communist forces could carry out some successful offensive operations in Laos, and that North Vietnamese forces in Laos could join South Vietnamese Communist forces in a drive against northern provinces in South Vietnam. "However, such moves are not likely unless Hanoi and Peiping are willing to take the risk of direct and punishing attacks on at least DRV territory—or unless Hanoi and Peiping come to believe that Free World persuasion coupled with internal US pressures would be strong enough to prevent such retaliation and force the US to a negotiated surrender."

> a war and in a situation where no parliamentary traditions or institutions can effectively channel political conflict.

Khanh's coup of January 27, the SNIE said, ". . . has given South Vietnam one more, perhaps fleeting, opportunity to find a viable government which can prosecute the war effort more effectively. However, given the lack of political consensus, the factional infighting, the increasingly inflammable new anti-Americanism and an almost certain increase of Communist pressures, particularly in the cities, we believe that the odds weigh heavily against success." It added: ". . . in the present political context, tolerable stability can only be achieved if there is central government whose structure and ranking personnel are acceptable to the majority of the important military and the majority of important Buddhists—a contingency which cannot at present be judged likely."

The SNIE concluded:

> The course of events in the near-term future will be materially influenced by the ultimate effect of the extreme nationalist sentiments whipped up in recent weeks. Such sentiments, because of their xenophobic and anti-US overtones, will obviously cause considerable complications for the US effort. There is a real danger that they could take a pro-neutralist turn which the Communists would certainly endeavor to fan and exploit and could be difficult for the US to counter. In another aspect, however, a vigorous nationalism identified with an indigenously devised government reflecting local political realities will be an essential ingredient for any dynamic and successful counter-insurgency effort.[41]

Chester Cooper, who had suggested to McGeorge Bundy that he should meet with Buddhist leaders, arranged for Bundy to talk to Thich Tri Quang.[42]

In an interview some years later, Cooper who was also present, commented on the meeting:[43]

> It was a very revealing meeting, and also very frustrating; in point of fact, it came to naught. It was a wonderful example of what happens when a surgical, cold, highly-trained western mind like Bundy's is confronted with lofty, spiritual, unfocused

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[41] In the April 1965 issue of *Foreign Affairs,* (vol. 43, no. 3), there was an article, pp. 387-408, "The Real Revolution in South Viet-Nam," by George A. Carver, Jr., who had served with the CIA in Vietnam and was then Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs to the Director of the CIA, which was patterned after SNIE 53-65. In the article, however, Carver was not identified as being with the CIA.

[42] Cooper's memorandum to Bundy, "*Saigon—Who Does What,*" n.d., Johnson Library, NSF International Meetings and Travel File.

In SNIE 53-65, Thich Tri Quang was described as follows:

"Tri Quang is the ablest and most influential Buddhist leader. His considerable political skills, however, are not matched by any equivalent degree of political maturity or responsibility. Vain and nationalistic to the point of xenophobia, there is little question that he harbors an emotional resentment of the present pervasiveness of US involvement in Vietnamese affairs. Although he recognized the present need for US support, over the long run would like to see the US out of South Vietnam. His short run intentions are harder to divine and may not be systematically or consistently developed even in his own mind. He professes to be anti-Communist and at times appears to recognize that his position and the movement he leads would get short shrift under a Communist regime. Nevertheless, he has such a high opinion of his own political abilities that he may feel that he can outwit the Communists and use them for his own ends; indeed, he may have already reached this conclusion. The relevant evidence is conflicting and precludes confident judgment. On balance we incline to the view that he is probably not now deliberately working for a Communist victory of Communist-dominated 'neutralist' settlement. Regardless of his intent, however, his disruptive actions thus far are serving these ends."

[43] CRS Interview with Chester Cooper, Apr. 10, 1979.

> (or at least unfocused to the western perception) approach to the practical matters of the day and make value judgments about the future. If one had had a recording of that conversation it could serve as almost a classical case study of the intellectual differences between the West and the East. It was fascinating listening to it, and even more so reflecting on it. But the stakes were very high, and it was terribly frustrating to see these people—both of them were trying somehow to understand each other and presumably looking for some kind of a resolution to a rather difficult problem—simply incapable of understanding what each other meant.

Cooper added:

> We came away from that meeting with a pretty clear idea of what it was that the Buddhists did *not* want; they could say what they did not want very crisply. They did not want to be discriminated against in government positions with respect to the Catholics. They didn't want the pagodas to be used for military purposes. The list of things they didn't want was fairly clear-cut. But what they *did* want was extremely hard to divine, or at least very hard to put down in terms of what anybody could do to achieve what they wanted. Certainly, the Americans weren't able to do it, but even the Government of Vietnam would have had difficulty, even if they had had complete carte blanche in the country, in understanding how the Buddhists perceived their programs and how they thought they could go about achieving them.[44]

After the meeting, Bundy sent a cable to CIA Director McCone, who had met with President Johnson on February 3 and had expressed deep concern about the political situation in Saigon and the imminence of a coup against Khanh. Bundy told McCone:[45]

> We have pressed throughout the day to see whether any member of country team believes that we can prevent continued deterioration in the absence of a "reasonably effective and stable government." The country team appears to share the President's judgement that such a government is necessary on all counts. Getting it is something else again.
>
> In particular, I think you should tell the President that a day of inquiry reveals no present prospect of a government acceptable to us which would also be acceptable to the leaders of the Buddhist Institute. The current situation among non-communist forces gives all the appearances of a civil war within a civil war.
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> In this situation, the construction of a Government of national unity may well require sharp confrontation with Buddhists before, during, or after the construction job.

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[44] Several weeks later, Tri Quang sent a letter to McGeorge Bundy in which he gave a further explanation of his views. (A translation of the letter was sent by Army channels to Washington from Saigon on Mar. 15, 1965 [DA IN 587438]). A request from CRS for declassification of this document was denied by the Department of State in 1988.

[45] Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 123; and Johnson Library, NSF International Meetings and Travel File, Bromley Smith memorandum to the President, Feb. 4, 1965, quoting Bundy's cable to McCone.

While in Saigon, Bundy also talked to other religious leaders, including the Catholic Archbishop of Saigon and an influential leader of the Cao Dai.[46]

By the end of the three-day visit to Vietnam, Bundy's report to the President, which he submitted when he returned to Washington, had been partially drafted, and was completed on February 7 on the return trip to Washington. "The prospect in Vietnam is grim," the report said.[47] "The situation in Vietnam is deteriorating, and without new U.S. action defeat appears inevitable—perhaps not in a matter of weeks or perhaps even months, but within the next year or so. There is still time to turn it around, but not much." "The international prestige of the United States, and a substantial part of our influence, are directly at risk in Vietnam." There was, the report added, "no way of negotiating ourselves out of Vietnam which offers any serious promise at present . . . any negotiated U.S. withdrawal today would mean surrender on the installment plan."

With respect to the question of political stability as a condition for U.S. action, the report stated:

> For immediate purposes—and especially for the initiation of reprisal policy, we believe that the government need be no stronger than it is today with General Khanh as the focus of raw power while a weak caretaker government goes through the motions. Such a government can execute military decisions and it can give formal political support to joint US/GVN policy. That is about all it can do. In the longer run, it is necessary that a government be established which will in one way or another be able to maintain its political authority against all challenges over a longer time than the governments of the last year and a half.

"There is one grave weakness in our posture in Vietnam which is within our own power to fix," the report said, "and that is a widespread belief that we do not have the will and force and patience and determination to take the necessary action and stay the course." To correct this weakness, and to put the United States in a position where it could "speak in Vietnam on many topics and in many ways, with growing force and effectiveness," Bundy and his associates recommended that the U.S. follow a "policy of sustained reprisal" (Phase II of the plan agreed upon in November 1964). They defined this as ". . . a policy in which air and naval action against the North is justified by and related to the whole Viet Cong campaign of violence and terror in the South." The primary object of reprisal against the North, the report added, was not to "'win' an air war against Hanoi, but rather to influence the course of the struggle in the South." Noting that "Action against the North is usually waged as a means of affecting the will of Hanoi to direct and support the VC," the report said: "We consider this an important but longer-range purpose. The immediate and critical targets are in the South—in the minds of the South Vietnamese and in the minds of the Viet Cong cadres." ". . . we do not exclude the impact on Hanoi," the report said. "We want to keep before Hanoi the carrot of our desisting as well as the stick of continued pressure."

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[46] For reports on these, see the Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington Airgram A-616, Feb. 9, 1965, encls. no. 1 and 2.

[47] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, "The Situation in Vietnam," Feb. 8, 1965.

Bundy proposed a sustained reprisal program, as contrasted with tit-for-tat reprisal such as the U.S. response to the Gulf of Tonkin incident. He also recognized, however, that such a program might not succeed:

> We cannot assert that a policy of sustained reprisal will succeed in changing the course of the contest in Vietnam. It may fail, and we cannot estimate the odds of success with any accuracy—they may be somewhere between 25% and 75%. What we can say is that even if it fails, the policy will be worth it. At a minimum it will damp down the charge that we did not do all that we could have done, and this charge will be important in many countries, including our own.

Bundy also stressed that the proposed program could help to deter insurgencies in other countries, but only if it was successful in Vietnam:

> . . . a reprisal policy—to the extent that it demonstrates U.S. willingness to employ this new norm in counter-insurgency—will set a higher price for the future upon all adventures of guerrilla warfare, and it should therefore somewhat increase our ability to deter such adventures. We must recognize, however, that that ability will be gravely weakened if there is failure for any reason in Vietnam.

The report concluded with this recommendation: "At its very best the struggle in Vietnam will be long. It seems to us important that this fundamental fact be made clear and our understanding of it be made clear to our people and to the people of Vietnam. Too often in the past we have conveyed the impression that we expect an early solution when those who live with this war know that no early solution is possible. It is our own belief that the people of the United States have the necessary will to accept and to execute a policy that rests upon the reality that there is no short cut to success in South Vietnam."

In his memoirs, President Johnson commented on the Bundy report: "We were at a turning point. Though the Bundy report proposed a course of action we had considered and turned down only three months before, I was impressed by its logic and persuaded strongly by its arguments. I knew that the situation had changed and that our actions would have to change too." [48]

McGeorge Bundy, however, says that his report ". . . had the shortest half-life of any policy paper ever submitted. The President read it and said, 'Is this any different from what we are already doing?' I said, 'Yes.' The President said, 'I don't think so.' And he put it aside." [49]

Bundy also argues that the course of action which was subsequently adopted was not what he had recommended in the report. Rather than a program of reprisal in which military means were to be used for political ends, and the use of such means limited accordingly, the military were allowed to do, "whatever they were not forbidden to do." "I'm not blaming anyone for that," Bundy says, "because it may have been quixotic to suppose that you conduct a military campaign with an essentially political purpose. But, of course, that was what Vietnam was all about all the way." [50]

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[48] *The Vantage Point,* p. 128. It is not accurate to say that the course of action proposed by Bundy was "turned down only three months before." It had merely been postponed.

[49] CRS Interview with McGeorge Bundy, Jan. 8, 1979.

Similarly, Bundy feels—and he says that this was one of his differences with President Johnson—that it was very important not to, ". . . write a blank check to the military. We kept saying we are going to give them whatever they require. You really shouldn't say that; you should give them what you decide they need." [51]

On February 10, NSC Asian specialist James Thomson sent Chester Cooper a memorandum questioning Bundy's recommendation for sustained reprisal.[52] "Have we," he asked, "faced—and has the President faced—the full shape of the risk of Chinese intervention? . . . Are we willing—and is the President willing—to face a ground war in Southeast Asia against the combined armies of North Vietnam and China?" Such a war, "a war in which Soviet neutrality simply cannot be assumed," was likely to occur, he said, as a result of the "sheer momentum of events (or of actions taken to bolster the morale of our friends in Saigon)" once the U.S. embarked on a program of graduated reprisal against North Vietnam. He added: "It is instructive to remember that the bright promise of our predecessor [Kennedy] Administration was early removed by a combination of accumulated momentum and events that led us into the first Cuban episode. I know that Cuba was not worth the price at the time; and I seriously question the higher price we may be forced to pay for Vietnam in Asia and in our relations with most of the rest of the world over the next decade."

Retaliation for the Attack at Pleiku

Early in the morning of February 7, which was the afternoon of Saturday, February 6 in Washington, as McGeorge Bundy's group was preparing to leave Vietnam, the Communists raided a U.S. base at Pleiku, killing eight Americans and wounding 60 or more.[53] The news was immediately cabled to the Pentagon by General Westmoreland, where the National Message Center relayed it to the Situation Room at the White House:

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[50] *Ibid.*

[51] *Ibid.*

[52] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, "Some Queries on Our Proposed Reprisal Track."

[53] This is David Halberstam's description of the scene in Saigon:

"The Pleiku hit had come in the middle of the night; when the MACV [Military Assistance Command, Vietnam] operations rooms opened up, all the officials, civilian and military, filed in. Titans everywhere, Taylor, Westmoreland, Alexis Johnson. There was so much brass that Alexis Johnson, Taylor's deputy, had so little to do that he wrote the press release, which annoyed the press officer, Barry Zorthian, because Zorthian felt it was poorly done and badly written. Incredible scenes, maps of 1:50,000 of the Pleiku area were pulled down, and there was Taylor with a magnifying glass peering closely at the map, as though looking for the mortar positions. Then a flash of excitement. In walked Mac Bundy, who was usually on the *other* end of the phone in Washington, sympathetic and cool, yet, they always felt, not entirely believing that it was as bad as they said. Now Mac was on their end of the phone. Striding in crisply, asking a few questions, confirming the latest details on the number of men killed. Then it was Bundy who told an aide to get the White House, not Taylor, who was nominally the President's man, but Mac Bundy. 'The White House is on the phone, sir.' Then sharply, very lucid, Mac took over, wasting no words, very much in control. Retaliation was in order. The attack had been directed specifically at Americans, and not at Vietnamese, thus we had to retaliate. Anything else would signal incorrectly. Clip. Clip. Clip. Let's go." David Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest* (New York: Random House, 1972) p. 520. See also Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, p. 335, and *The Vantage Point*, pp. 123-126.

> . . . shortly after 3:00 p.m. . . . Arthur McCafferty, an ex-CIA man standing the communications watch [in the Situation Room] ripped Westmoreland's message off the machine and handed it to Bromley K. Smith, a rugged, graying fifty-three-year-old former Foreign Service officer now serving as executive secretary of the National Security Council. Smith had planned to spend that Saturday night at home, but as he read the cable he realized it was now a futile hope. Bounding up the stairs two at a time, Smith carried the dispatch directly to the Cabinet Room, where, by coincidence, the President was already conferring with some of his top security officials [Ball, Vance, General Wheeler, and Bill Moyers].[54]

In Saigon, Taylor, Westmoreland and McGeorge Bundy, as well as members of Bundy's party, agreed that the U.S. should retaliate, and Bundy reported this by telephone to Vance at the White House. In an interview some years later, Bundy said that the attack at Pleiku, ". . . crystallized the opinion that everyone there [Saigon] already had. . . . I got a clear reinforcement of that by being there, because for them it was a test of whether Washington meant what it said. 'Do they mean to stay with us and back us up, or are they going to let this sort of thing happen with no answer?' I joined, therefore, strongly in the recommendation that there should be a reprisal." [55]

According to Chester Cooper, the Pleiku incident gave the administration "an opportunity to put into motion a policy which they had already decided upon, but needed a fairly conspicuous threshold before they could implement." This is his explanation:[56]

> After the election in the autumn of 1964, Johnson was very busy trying to fashion his own programs for the new administration, but yet he had pretty much made up his mind that he was not going to tolerate much more of the North Vietnamese or the Viet Cong attacks on Americans without some show of force. And so, by and large, there was a determination that we would attack the North Vietnamese at the source of their power if sufficient provocation were given. The administration had in mind bombing the North, but felt this could not be justified, or could not be rationalized, either in the United States or abroad, unless it was demonstrably in retaliation for some horrendous act, an act that everybody would agree was something more than a potshot at a GI or some rather inconsequential bit of terrorism. So, when Pleiku occurred, this seemed very much the sort of thing, almost an ideal incident for the administration, because it could then rationalize a retaliatory bombing attack on the North.

About four hours after word of the attack was received in Washington, the National Security Council assembled at the White House at 7:45 p.m. on February 6 (7:45 a.m. on February 7 in

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[54] This description is from Charles Roberts, *LBJ's Inner Circle* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1965), p. 19.

[55] CRS Interview with McGeorge Bundy, Jan. 8, 1979.

[56] CRS Interview with Chester Cooper, Apr. 10, 1979.

Saigon). Besides the President there were McNamara and Vance from the Defense Department as well as General Wheeler, Chairman of the JCS, and, from the State Department, Acting Secretary of State Ball, (Rusk was in Florida recuperating from an illness), Ambassador at Large Llewellyn Thompson (a Russian expert and former U.S. Ambassador to the U.S.S.R.), and William Bundy; from the CIA there were Lt. Gen. Marshall S. Carter, Deputy Director, and William Colby (Chief of the Far East Division in the Deputy Directorate of Plans, the covert part of CIA). Others who attended were Secretary of the Treasury C. Douglas Dillon and Carl Rowan, Director of the U.S. Information Agency. Also present were the Democratic leaders of the House and Senate, Speaker John W. McCormack (D/Mass.) and Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield. Bromley Smith from the NSC staff and George E. Reedy, Jr. and Bill Moyers from the White House staff also attended. Vice President Humphrey was in Minnesota.

All of those present from the executive branch, including Ball,[57] agreed that the U.S. should retaliate.[58] So did Speaker McCormack. Only Senator Mansfield was opposed. According to the notes of the meeting, he said: "The North Vietnamese attack has opened many eyes. We are not now in a penny ante game," and he added, "It appears that the local populace in South Vietnam is not behind us, else the Viet Cong could not have carried out their surprise attack."

Among other things, the group apparently considered whether a congressional resolution was needed "to insure the legal position of the Administration." The only reaction, according to the notes of the meeting, which do not indicate who raised the subject on whether it was discussed further, was George Ball's statement: "the quicker we have a resolution the better."

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[57] Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings File, Summary Notes of 545th NSC Meeting, Feb. 6, 1965. Ball has given this justification of his support for bombing: "The demand for prompt retaliation was overwhelming and I realized that further frontal opposition would be not only futile but tactically unwise. I could gain nothing by antagonizing my colleagues if the President could no longer be deterred. That point became even clearer when Cyrus Vance telephoned Mac Bundy, who was then in Saigon conferring with Taylor and Westmoreland. Should we now begin the air strikes? The answer of the Saigon team was loudly affirmative." George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), pp. 389- 390.

According to one source, "Ball and Llewellyn Thompson took the position that although they supported the air strikes, and would support increased military pressure on the North, they did so in the belief that this would result in a better bargaining position, which would enable the U.S. to negotiate an international settlement under which it could gradually reduce its role in Vietnam." Henry Brandon, *Anatomy of Error* (Boston: Gambit, 1969), p. 52. For Thompson's position, see also *The Best and the Brightest,* p. 522.

[58] Secretary of the Treasury Douglas Dillon, who had been involved in U.S. policy toward Vietnam while serving as U.S. Ambassador to France during the early years of the Eisenhower administration, recalls that he told President Johnson: "I agree, Mr. President, with what is proposed but only on the understanding that we are prepared to go full out, including the mining of Haiphong, if the North Vietnamese continue their aggression." Letter from Douglas Dillon to Professor Fred Greenstein of Princeton University, Mar. 18, 1988. The author is grateful to Mr. Dillon and to Professor Greenstein for permission to quote from this letter. Dillon says that, "The President seemed a bit taken aback and annoyed but replied immediately, in a rather offhand manner, that, of course, we were so prepared. He then went on to the next person." Dillon adds: "I made my statement knowing full well that both McNamara and Ball, representing State, were only in favor of using force to the minimum extent possible, and I wanted to make clear that I felt we should not attack North Vietnam at all unless we were prepared to go all the way. I was the only person to make such a reservation, but I am sure that, if asked, McCone and Wheeler would have been in full agreement with me." "I did not believe," Dillon says, "in the use of force to send signals to the enemy in the hope that he would read them right and behave accordingly. I did not believe in using force to improve Saigon's morale."

At the end of the meeting the President asked each person whether he approved of a retaliatory airstrike. All agreed except Mansfield, who said he thought that the U.S. should negotiate. This is William Bundy's account:[59]

> The President did not try to draw the Majority Leader out, as he might have done in a setting of more privacy and less tension. Instead, his reply was terse and quite biting. As I recall, he asked how there could be any hope in that if our men were dying and we were sitting with our hands behind our backs? But it was not a rational attempt to persuade. Hours and hours of private talk lay behind the difference now nakedly revealed. My impression was that the Senator would have given anything to be alone with the President; finding that he had to speak in front of others, he did so with typical courage and frankness. But never again did he take this kind of blunt position in an open meeting, doubtless because the President and he both worked to keep their basic exchanges private. My suspicion is that the President simply could not imagine that even Mansfield would disagree on that occasion. Whatever differences there were on policy, if American "boys" were dying you had to hit back. It was a gut reaction.
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> Yet this strong human impulse of the President's would not have prevailed without the whole build-up of events and thought over the past year. He had gone one way at Tonkin, another at the time of the Bien Hoa and Brink's attacks. Now he had returned to the Tonkin response, acting within the framework of the first clause of the Tonkin Resolution, but in a new context.
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> So the difference between the President and Mansfield was a profound difference of policy, and the decision the President

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[59] Bundy MS., ch. 22, p. B-6. This is President Johnson's account (*The Vantage Point*, p. 125): "I went around the table, asking each person if he agreed with the decision. Everyone present expressed his concurrence with one exception. Senator Mike Mansfield was opposed. We should be cautious, he warned. We might be getting into a war with China. We might be healing the split between Moscow and Peking. He strongly opposed the idea of retaliation, but he proposed no alternative.

" 'We have kept our gun over the mantle and our shells in the cupboard for a long time now,' I said. 'And what was the result? They are killing our men while they sleep in the night. I can't ask our American soldiers out there to continue to fight with one hand tied behind their backs.'

"I thought that perhaps a sudden and effective air strike would convince the leaders in Hanoi that we were serious in our purpose and also that the North could not count on continued immunity if they persisted in aggression in the South. I realized the risks of involving the Soviets or the Chinese, as Senator Mansfield feared, I said, but neither of them was trying to bring peace or even urging restraint. I doubted that they wanted direct involvement themselves. I pointed out that our intelligence analysts believed Red China would not enter the war unless there was an invasion in the northern part of North Vietnam or unless the Hanoi regime was in danger of being toppled."

This is David Halberstam's description of Johnson's response to Mansfield (*The Best and the Brightest*, p. 522):

"Even as he finished, the others at the meeting could tell that Johnson had welcomed his dissent; it was a desired part of the scenario because it permitted Johnson to do his performance, which he now did. No, there was no alternative. We had tried to be peaceful, we had tried to disregard provocation in the past, but now it had gone too far. Lyndon Johnson, he said, was not going to be the President of the United States who let Munich happen. Who stood by while aggressors picked on their little neighbors. And he was not going to let these people kill American boys who were out there, boys who were dying in their tents. What would happen to me if I didn't defend our boys; what would the American people think of me, with those boys out there dying in their sleep? It was all flag, and as he spoke the others nodded, and Mansfield nodded, as if he too knew, involuntarily or not, that he had somehow just played the role Johnson had prescribed for him, and that in a sense a curtain was coming down. The decisions had been made, all the questions had been asked, and now the answers were given."

was making was understood by all to be more than a decision to hit back for one night's attack in a guerrilla war where incidents were legion.

William Bundy adds: ". . . this was the only time I ever saw a member of the Congress who said, 'Mr. President, I think you are wrong on basic policy' in any direct session. This was not the position taken at all in these meetings by others in the legislative branch. I think that experience with Senator Mansfield probably played some part. In the subsequent sessions, he either didn't speak his piece, and one assumed that he said it privately to the President and felt he'd had his day in court, or he was not invited in the future." [60]

As the meeting concluded at 9:00 p.m., the President ordered an immediate retaliatory airstrike (FLAMING DART I) against four army barracks in the southern part of North Vietnam, below the 19th parallel, to be carried out by 132 U.S. and 22 South Vietnamese planes, and he asked those in attendance to return to the White House at 8 a.m. the following morning.[61]

On the morning of February 7, 1965, the NSC met again from 8:00 a.m. to 9:20 a.m.[62] Besides the President, those who had attended the meeting the previous day were also present: McNamara, Vance, General Wheeler, Ball, Thompson, William Bundy, Carter, Colby, Dillon and Rowan. Senator Mansfield was present, as were Speaker McCormack and Representative Ford, the House Republican leader. Senate Republican Leader Dirksen was invited but could not attend. Also present were Smith from the NSC staff and Reedy, Gen. Chester V. Clifton, Jr. (military aide to the President), Moyers, and Jack J. Valenti from the White House staff. McNamara reported that because of the weather only 33 U.S. aircraft had attacked one of the three targets they were scheduled to hit and the South Vietnamese had not been able to hit their one target. Taylor, he said, had recommended that U.S. and South Vietnamese planes should attack the remaining targets. McNamara said he disagreed; the reprisal was specific, and to attack the other targets a day later would be to suggest to the North Vietnamese that the U.S. was beginning an offensive. He agreed, however, that South Vietnamese planes should attack their one target. Others concurred. "The punishment should fit the crime," Llewellyn Thompson said.

Representative Ford asked why the U.S. should not attack the other two targets: "If the plan to strike four was good, why should we not complete it?" Several members of the NSC then explained to him the theory behind this kind of graduated pressure.

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[60] CRS Interview with William Bundy, Aug. 3, 1978.

[61] According to Allen S. Whiting, who was then Director, Office of Research and Analysis, Far East, in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the February 7 reprisal raid was made "ostensibly in response to a guerrilla attack on American troops and aircraft at Pleiku. . . ." "Actually," he said, "the raids were preplanned on the basis of the author's [Whiting] forecast that a Communist assault would be mounted against an American installation during the visit of McGeorge Bundy. . . ." Allen S. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence, India and Indochina* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1975), pp. 178, 274 fn. 23. Kahin (*Intervention*, p. 277) states that in an interview with McGeorge Bundy in December 1984, Bundy said that he did not recall having been informed of Whiting's forecast. At present, there is no evidence one way or the other with respect to Bundy's knowledge of the forecast. It is clear, however, that those who favored stronger U.S. action, including McGeorge Bundy, were anticipating an attack at some point to which the U.S. could respond, and that military plans had already been made for such a response.

[62] Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings File, Summary Notes of 546th NSC Meeting, Feb. 7, 1965.

The President approved the airstrike by the Vietnamese and ordered the withdrawal of all U.S. dependents from Saigon. According to the notes of the meeting, Mansfield said, "Why cannot we handle this matter through the United Nations? Can't the Geneva powers act?" and Johnson replied, "This cannot be done." [63]

Late that day (Sunday, February 7), McGeorge Bundy's party returned from Vietnam, and Bundy met with the President from 10:48 p.m. to 11:25 p.m. to report briefly on the trip.

The next day (February 8), the NSC met again from 9:48 a.m. to 11:35 a.m.[64] Besides the President, there were McGeorge Bundy and three members of his party: McNaughton, General Goodpaster, and Leonard Unger, as well as McNamara, Vance, General Wheeler, Ball, Thompson, William Bundy, McCone, Dillon and Rowan. David E. Bell, Director of the Agency for International Development (the foreign aid program) was also present, along with William Gaud, Deputy Director. Present from the White House and NSC staffs were Reedy, Moyers, Valenti, Lawrence F. O'Brien, S. Douglass Cater, Jr., Smith and Cooper. Several Members of Congress were also invited to attend, but before they arrived, the President and his advisers held a preliminary meeting[65] at which McNamara said that it was not necessary for the U.S. to bomb North Vietnam every day; once a week would be "enough to keep morale up in Saigon."

The President said, "We face a choice of going forward or running. We have chosen the first alternative. All of us agree on this but there remains some difference as to how fast we should go forward."

In response to a question as to what the congressional leaders should be told, the President said he would ask McNamara to report on the bombing raid, and he would then explain the reasons for intensifying U.S. efforts despite the continuing instability of the South Vietnamese Government.

At 10:30 a.m., Speaker McCormack, Representative Ford, and Senators Mansfeld and Dirksen joined the group. McNamara reported on the South Vietnamese airstrike which had been carried out the previous day. Ball, commenting on Kosygin's visit to Hanoi, said that the Russians may not have known of the plans for the "North Vietnamese" attack on Pleiku. "If so, they may have been mouse-trapped by Hanoi. If they had known of the attack, the Russians might not have sent Kosygin to Hanoi."

Ball added that the U.S. had explained to the Russians why the U.S. retaliated. "Our hope is that they will understand why we acted as we did, at least to the extent of being annoyed by the North Vietnamese action."

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[63] *Ibid.* For the White House announcements of the airstrikes see *Public Papers of the President,* Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, pp. 153-154.

[64] Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings File, Summary Notes of 547th NSC Meeting, Feb. 8, 1965. When this document was released in 1980, parts were excised. In 1988, the entire document was declassified.

[65] A one-page "partial record" of this preliminary meeting is in the Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings File.

Llewellyn Thompson reported on a conversation with Anatole Dobrynin, Ambassador of the U.S.S.R. to the U.S., in which he told Dobrynin that the U.S. had cancelled the DE SOTO patrol which had been scheduled during Kosygin's visit to Hanoi, "to be certain that no embarrassing incident would occur during that time," but that the U.S. had been forced to react to the attack on its forces at Pleiku.

The President asked those present to preserve the "secrecy of the various ways we communicate with the Russians." He said he had authorized Thompson's meeting with Dobrynin because of the importance of conveying U.S. views to the Russians, but, "He did not want such conversations to become known to the public."

The President then summarized the U.S. position. He said that in December he had approved a program of additional pressure on North Vietnam but delayed implementing it until the South Vietnamese could establish a stable government and U.S. dependents could be withdrawn. "We are now ready," he said, "to return to our program of pushing forward in an effort to defeat North Vietnamese aggression without escalating the war." The U.S. had to respond to the attack on Pleiku. "If we had failed to respond we would have conveyed to Hanoi, Peking and Moscow our lack of interest in the fate of the South Vietnamese Government. In addition, the South Vietnamese would have thought we had abandoned them." He added: "There is a bad governmental situation in Saigon but it is our hope that current U.S. action may pull together the various forces in Saigon and thus make possible the establishment of a stable government."

After a report from General Goodpaster, a member of the Bundy mission, on the details of the attack, the President, "said that we were up against highly skilled guerrilla fighters. He said there was no way to insure against such attacks as that which occurred at Pleiku short of sending a very large number of U.S. troops to Vietnam."

Representative Ford asked whether the new program would involve additional personnel and funding, and whether, "all we intended to do was to react to Viet Cong provocations." The President replied that there was enough money and there were enough men to meet present needs, and that, "we did not intend to limit our actions to retaliating against Viet Cong attacks."

Senator Dirksen asked what the effect would be if the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam. "McGeorge Bundy replied that if we pulled out there would be a strong feeling in the nations of Southeast Asia that we had failed to carry out our policy of assisting the Vietnamese to continue as an independent state. The consequences in Southeast Asia of our pull-out would be very large. In other parts of the world the effect would also be very serious, even to the extent of affecting the morale in Berlin."

Dirksen asked McCone what the reaction of the Chinese would be, and McCone replied that, ". . . we did not know as yet, but he recalled that Peking's reaction to the Gulf of Tonkin incident had been minor."

The President referred to his authority for conducting military operations against North Vietnam: "The President said that the congressional resolution on Vietnam plus the legal power of the presidency made it possible for him to carry out at a manageable level an effort to deter, destroy and diminish the strength of the North Vietnamese aggressors and to try to convince them to leave South Vietnam alone. He said that the views of a few Senators could not control his actions. He intended to use the congressional resolution carefully but effectively." The notes of the meeting do not indicate that there were any comments following this statement.

After the meeting, the President sent a cable to Ambassador Taylor, drafted by McGeorge Bundy, telling Taylor of the decision to begin Phase II—sustained reprisal, or "continuing action" as the President apparently preferred that it be called:[66]

> In our discussions in December we agreed upon the importance of undertaking appropriate action against North Vietnam. We then felt it important to establish as strong a government as possible, and you have been doing your level best to that end. It also seemed to me essential to get women and children out of the area, and now we have taken that decision. I am very prepared to go forward with the best government we can get, and accordingly I wish you to know that I have today decided that we will carry out our December plan for continuing action against North Vietnam with modifications up and down in tempo and scale in the light of your recommendations as Bundy reports them, and our own continuing review of the situation.

The cable added:

> I am impressed by argument that the building of a minimum government will benefit by some private assurances from us to the highest levels that we do now intend to take continuing action. Therefore, you are authorized to convey this in general terms to key leaders and political figures as you see fit. At the same time you should say that we want to work with a unified and going government, and that the sooner they can work out such a government, the better we can plan and execute the continuing actions we have in mind.

On February 9, 1965, Taylor sent Washington a cable on his proposal for U.S. action, which was quite similar to McGeorge Bundy's proposal in his memorandum to the President on February 7.[67] In a cable on February 12, Taylor explained his position:[68]

> In review of the rationale for concept of graduated reprisals we are of the opinion that, in order of importance, it should have the following objectives:
>
> (a) The will of Hanoi leaders;
>
> (b) GVN morale; and
>
> (c) Physical destruction to reduce the DRV ability to support the VC.
>
> Of these three, the first appears to us by far the most important, since our effectiveness in influencing Hanoi leadership

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[66] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Washington to Saigon 1653, Feb. 8, 1965.

[67] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 315-316, Saigon to Washington 2455, Feb. 9, 1965. Later that same day, he responded to the cable from Washington informing him of the decision to begin continuing action: "We are most happy over your decision," he said. Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President, Saigon to Washington 2466, Feb. 9, 1965.

[68] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 316, Saigon to Washington 2536, Feb. 12, 1965.

> will, in the long run, determine the success or failure of our efforts in both North and South Vietnam. Second objective, effect on GVN morale, is also important and fortunately the requirements for building morale in the South are roughly the same as those for impressing Hanoi leaders with the rising costs of their support of the VC. . . . Effect of the physical destruction of material objects and infliction of casualties will not, in our judgment, have a decisive bearing upon the ability of the DRV to support VC. However, degree of damage and number of casualties inflicted gauge the impact of our operations on Hanoi leadership and hence are important as a measure of their discomfort.

CINCPAC and the JCS, while generally agreeing with the concept of graduated pressure, continued to stress the need for a strong military response. In a cable to the JCS on February 17,[69] Admiral Sharp (CINCPAC) commented: "I would hope that we are thinking, and will act, in terms of a 'graduated pressures' philosophy which has more of a connotation of steady, relentless movement toward our objective of convincing Hanoi and Peiping of the prohibitive cost to them of their program of subversion, insurgency and aggression in Southeast Asia." [70]

Thus, on February 8, 1965 the decision was made by the President to begin waging war on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam). He said he had the authority he needed to make that decision and to carry out such military activities "at a manageable level," and, based on the notes of the meeting, none of the leaders of Congress who were present—and all of the principal elected leaders of the House and Senate were at the meeting—disagreed with that statement or suggested that consideration should be given to further action by Congress to authorize the decision to go to war. George Ball's feeling at the meeting on February 6 that, "the quicker we have a [congressional] resolution the better," does not appear to have been shared by either the President or the leaders of Congress.

It is important, however, to understand the participants' view of this decision. Did the President and his associates, as well as congressional leaders who were present at the meeting, consider it to be a decision to go to war, or did they view it as a decision to undertake military action short of "war"? Did congressional leaders view it as a decision in which Congress should play its constitutional role and take further action beyond the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution to authorize the act of going to war, or did they agree with the President that he already had the authority to take such action?

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[69] *Ibid.*, p. 318, CINCPAC to JCS 170217Z, Feb. 1965.

[70] *Ibid.*, pp. 318-321, CINCPAC to JCS 170217Z, Feb. 17, 1965, and JCSM-100-65, Feb. 11, 1965. In a cable on February 7 (Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, CINCPAC to JCS 071035Z, Feb. 7, 1965) CINCPAC had recommended a number of military steps which the U.S. could take, such as armed reconnaissance flights and photographic reconnaissance flights over the southern part of North Vietnam, which would "benefit the political and military situation" in South Vietnam without putting the U.S. in a "position of having taken a course which must be prosecuted swiftly to a conclusion in partnership with the present SVN government." One of the proposals was for ". . . frequent DESOTO patrols in as much as the DRV and Chicoms probably estimate that DESOTO patrols are used for the purpose of generating reaction against which we can retaliate, this would put them very much on the defensive. It would no doubt cause them to realize that we have taken a firmer stand."

The paucity of the evidence precludes a definitive answer to these questions, but it would appear that the decision was viewed by all of the participants as being one involving the limited use of force short of war and of such magnitude as not to require further action by Congress at that time. Moreover, there seems to have been a general feeling, as was argued at the time of the Gulf of Tonkin incidents in August 1964, that a limited military response that would indicate U.S. determination to apply greater force if necessary would deter the Communists and persuade them to accept a cessation of the conflict.

On February 8, after the NSC meeting, Mansfield sent the President a memorandum summarizing the views he had stated in the three NSC meetings:[71]

> I have grave doubts about the ability of General Khanh's government. I have no doubt but that the great majority of the population of South Vietnam are tired of the war and will give us no significant assistance. I have a full awareness of your feelings, which I share, because of the attack on Pleiku. I appreciate, too, your repeated statements that it is not your desire to spread the war. However, the prospect for enlargement now looms larger and I think it is only fair that I give you my honest opinions, as I did on Saturday and Sunday, because to do otherwise would be a disservice to you and to the Nation.
>
> In this connection you will recall that I also stated at the meetings that before we make any moves that we understand their full implications, in terms of the costs involved, and the fact, as I see it, that if we went too far in North Vietnam we would be in a far worse position than we were in Korea.
>
> For, in a larger sense, not only can we not depend on the South Vietnamese population, but we can also place very little reliability on the Laotians and the Thais and none whatever on Cambodia. Moreover, beyond Indochina, we could well be squeezed in a nut cracker by developing events throughout Southeast Asia over which the Chinese cast an ominous shadow. . . .

Mansfield concluded:

> What the answer to the situation is at the moment I do not know nor does anyone else. But I am persuaded that the trend toward enlargement of the conflict and a continuous deepening of our military commitment on the Asian mainland, despite your desire to the contrary, is not going to provide one. . . .

On February 9, McGeorge Bundy replied to Mansfield on behalf of the President with a point-by-point rebuttal of Mansfield's arguments. With respect to the U.N., Bundy said, "The President has considered your suggestion that we take the matter to the United Nations. He regrets that previous discussions of the question in the United Nations have not indicated any desire of the members of that body to take any action whatever. From the Secretary General on down, we are unable to find any expert on the UN who sees any prospect that it can act effectively in the present situation in Vietnam. Neither is the President aware of any prospect that any other conference or forum would currently lead to an agreement by the Communists to end the fighting on any terms other than those of surrender." [72]

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[71] Johnson Library, NSF Name File, Mansfield, Vietnam.

No action was taken by the Foreign Relations Committee with respect to the President's decision to begin attacking North Vietnam except for an executive session hearing on February 9 of the Committee's Far Eastern Affairs Subcommittee, chaired by Senator Frank J. Lausche (D/Ohio), a strong supporter of the President's Vietnam policy.[73] The witness was William Bundy. Present were Lausche, Joseph S. Clark (D/Pa.), Claiborne Pell (D/R.I.), George D. Aiken (R/Vt.), Frank Carlson (R/Kan.), Clifford P. Case (R/N.J.). Bundy reported on the U.S. reprisal after the raid on Pleiku, and said that the Executive was considering additional actions of that kind "if the North Vietnamese continue with this whole pattern of infiltration on a stepped-up scale. . . ." Senator Carlson asked whether there were plans for deeper U.S. involvement. Bundy replied that there were "no further plans at this time . . . [but] I don't want to imply that the book is closed; only that this page is turned." Carlson asked whether more U.S. forces would be used if the situation continued to deteriorate. Bundy did not directly answer the question, referring instead to the recent lack of Communist military successes. Carlson then asked whether there had been a "policy decision" to expand the war if the situation continued to deteriorate. Bundy replied, "Sir, I cannot say at this point. We are weighing the situation very heavily, very hard. . . . The book is still open." "We have a knife edged war," (i.e., on the one hand assuring the Vietnamese of the U.S. commitment, and on the other avoiding the impression of taking over the war.)

That same day (February 9), the President telephoned Fulbright at about 12:30 p.m., and, according to the White House secretary's notes on the conversation, "Pres. said, 'I understand you've been snubbed,' referring to news stories on JWF not attending [NSC] meetings. Senator laughed and said 'he knew better than that,' and the President invited him to come down in the next hour." At about 1 p.m., Fulbright arrived, and the two met for slightly over an hour.[74] Several days later (February 14), Senator and Mrs. Fulbright were guests of the Johnsons at a small White House dinner party.

In Congress as a whole the reaction to the U.S. retaliatory raid following the attacks on Pleiku was muted, but the general attitude was that the President was right in striking back. There was a growing uneasiness, however, about the trend toward increasing military involvement, as well as the lack of a clear statement of U.S. policy, especially by the President. Representative John Lindsay (R/N.Y.), a liberal internationalist, who was one of the few Members of Congress to comment publicly, put the matter this way in a speech in the House on February 8:[75]

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[72] Same location.

[73] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, unpublished executive session transcript, Feb. 9, 1965.

[74] Johnson Library, White House Daily Diary, Feb. 9, 1965.

[75] *CR*, vol. 111, p. 2155. For comments by Senators Saltonstall and Clark see p. 2261. For a statement by Senator Jacob K. Javits (R/N.Y.), see pp. 2632-33.

> . . . the President must define our policy in Vietnam. It is still apparent that we have no clear policy except an aimless patchwork of scotch tape and bailing wire that becomes more confused every day. It should not be necessary, I suppose, to express our shock and dismay over the widening American bloodshed. But we need not be taken for fools in accepting without further explanation that this is permitted in the name of "stability." Stability of what? A series of cabals and cliques that defy stability and have no base of support in the country other than our own military backup? If there is any element of American political prestige in addition to the military it is declining very rapidly. Stabilize the area with what then? More mortars and guns that eventually are turned against us? Or with more inspection tours by four star generals thereby again leaving the impression that the full military might of the United States is committed, which is neither true nor desirable.
>
> There will be, from now on, more strikes and counter strikes until the little remaining cover is totally stripped away and the involvement that is euphemistically known as military support becomes a naked U.S. war that has neither front lines nor back lines, nor beginning or ending, nor commitment by the very people we seek to defend. . . .

The White House itself was keeping a close eye on the reaction of the public, and on February 9 McGeorge Bundy sent this memorandum ("Vietnam-Telegrams from the Public") to the President:[76]

> 1. As of this morning, the White House had received about 1,500 telegrams concerning our action in Vietnam. White House tabulators regard the flow as medium to heavy. It is more than we had during the Panama crisis (800), about the same as we received during the Tonkin incident (1,650), and much less than we received during the Cuba crisis (12,700 in seven days).
>
> 2. So far as we can tell, the vast majority of the telegrams seem to be coming from private individuals rather than groups, and are running almost 12 to 1 against the Government's retaliatory action. It is pertinent to note that this is sharply different from the Gulf of Tonkin incident which produced a ratio of less than 2 to 1 against the Government's action. It is also interesting to note that, during the Panama crisis in January 1964, the cables ran roughly 14 to 1 in favor of a firm U.S. position.
>
> 3. A sample of 300 of the con telegrams produced the following rather interesting factors. *First,* the sources of a large proportion of the telegrams seemed geographically concentrated. The New York City area and California each produced about 34% of the telegrams; New England and the Middle Atlantic states (not including the New York City area) produced roughly 14% while the rest of the country produced about 18%. *Second,* women seemed to be most active in sending telegrams. Husband/wife teams accounted for about 39% of the tele-

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[76] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

grams, women for roughly 38%, and men for about 23%. *Third,* while they overlapped considerably, the most frequently mentioned substantive issues, in order of frequency, were (a) that we should negotiate, (b) that we are trigger happy and there will be escalation, (c) that we are aggressors and/or immoral, and (d) that we should withdraw.

4. While it seems somewhat dangerous to look for too much meaning in such a group of telegrams, they do point to certain tentative conclusions: *First,* the comparison with the Tonkin figures indicates that the propensity of the American people to punch the Communists in the nose over Vietnam seems considerably less than it was six months ago. *Second,* the comparison with the Panama figures (i.e., 14 to 1 in favor of a firm U.S. stand) are probably also instructive. In part, they may mean that Americans are more willing to stand firm when the issue is geographically closer to home. In part, they may also mean that Americans are more willing to stand firm as long as there is no relatively large-scale shooting involved. *Third,* the statistics, in general, indicate that we have an education problem that bears close watching and more work.

In the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, about 500 letters on Vietnam were received by the end of February. Of these, 80 percent were in favor of "getting out peacefully and negotiating a settlement," 10 percent for "turning it over to an international body," and 10 percent were "generally upset over the situation." [77]

Public opinion polls taken at the time by George H. Gallup and Louis Harris indicated that, as usually happens in a foreign policy "crisis" in which the President is involved—the " 'rally-round-the flag' effect," [78] the public strongly supported the President's action in ordering retaliatory bombing of North Vietnam. (Increased support resulting from a crisis tends, however, to be temporary.)[79] A Gallup Poll completed on February 13 (after the U.S. had also retaliated for an attack on Qui Nhon on February 10), and released on February 15, reported that two out of every three respondents who had followed the news on Vietnam (9 out of every 10 interviewed) approved of what the President was doing:[80]

> *"Do you approve or disapprove of the action taken by the United States in Vietnam in the last few days?"*

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[77] National Archives, RG 46, Carl Marcy Chronological File, Memorandum from Carl Marcy (Chief of Staff) to Senator Fulbright, Mar. 1, 1965.

[78] This phenomenon has been noted by a number of public opinion studies. See especially John E. Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion* (New York: John Wiley, 1973), pp. 208-213. A related phenomenon could be called "rally-round-the-President." Studies have shown that public support for the President increases whenever the President takes a new initiative, "whether it is," as one article on the Vietnam war noted, "in the direction of escalation or a reduction of commitment." Philip E. Converse and Howard Schuman, "'Silent Majorities' and the Vietnam War," *Scientific American,* 222 (June 1970), pp. 17-25, at 21.

[79] Sidney Verba, et al., "Public Opinion and the War in Vietnam," *American Political Science Review,* 61 (June 1967), pp. 317-333, at 333.

[80] *Washington Post,* Feb. 16, 1965, and Gallup, *The Gallup Poll,* vol. 3, p. 1925. Gordon Chase, an NSC staff member, sent a copy of the poll to McGeorge Bundy on February 16 with this note: "The attached Gallup Poll, showing that 67 percent of the American people approve of our action in Vietnam, is at once highly encouraging and somewhat startling—startling, in view of the fact that the telegrams into the White House are still running at about 14 to 1 against our actions. (It goes to show something about telegrams to the White House.)" Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

	Percent
Approve	67
Disapprove	15
No opinion	18

A Harris survey (which also was taken after the retaliation for the Qui Nhon attack) released on February 22 reported that, "83 percent of the public believe Mr. Johnson was right in ordering retaliatory bombing."[81]

The public also agreed emphatically with the proposition that if the U.S. withdrew from South Vietnam the Communists would take control of the area. This was the response to a question by Harris in the February 22 survey:

> *"From what you read or have heard, in your opinion do you think if we now withdrew from Vietnam, the Communists would take over all of Southeast Asia or do you feel that might not happen?"*

	Percent
Communists would take over all Southeast Asia	78
Might not happen	10
Not sure	11

According to Harris, 79 percent of respondents replied that it was "very important" that Communist control of Southeast Asia should be prevented.[82]

Moreover, in response to a question by Gallup in the February 13 poll, the public seemed to approve the continuation of existing U.S. efforts:[83]

> *"Should the United States continue its present efforts in South Vietnam, or should we pull our forces out?"*

	Percent
Continue present efforts	64[84]
Pull out	18
No opinion	18

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[81] *Washington Post*, Feb. 22, 1965. This article, which contained the full text of Harris' press release, did not give the wording of the question or the percentages of other responses.

[82] The *Washington Post* article does not give the wording of the question which prompted this response, nor does it provide the percentages of other responses to the question.

[83] In polls taken during 1964, Gallup had asked the open-ended question: "*What do you think should be done next in Vietnam?*" (see Mueller, p. 81) rather than the much more limited and directed question which he asked in February 1965 ("*Should the United States continue its present efforts in South Vietnam, or should we pull our forces out?*"), and the replies had been divided into eight categories rather than into the two categories of answers in the February 1965 poll. On Apr. 23, 1965, Gallup resumed his 1964 question. See p. 143 below.

[84] When the 64 percent who said that the U.S. should continue its present efforts were asked if it should do so at the risk of nuclear war, about half of the 64 percent said it should:

"Should the U.S. continue its present efforts in South Vietnam, at the risk of nuclear war?"

	Percentage of the 64%
U.S. should continue efforts at risk of nuclear war	31
Should not	21
No opinion	12

When Gallup asked the same question a month later the response was almost the same (66 percent to continue, 19 percent to pull out, and 15 percent no opinion).[85]

These responses suggest there was strong support for negotiations, despite the fact that half of the 66 percent who wanted to continue U.S. efforts rather than pulling out favored doing so at the risk of nuclear war.

On the other hand, however, when Harris asked about U.S. policy, he phrased the question differently and he got significantly different answers. Instead of asking whether the U.S. should continue or pull out, he asked this question (which he had also asked in January 1965 and in November 1964):

> *"Which of these three courses do you favor for the U.S. in Vietnam: Carry the war into North Vietnam, at the risk of bringing Red China into the war; negotiate a settlement with the Communists and get out now; or continue to hold the line there to prevent the Communists from taking over South Vietnam?"*[86]

[In percent]

	February 1965	*January 1965*	*November 1964*
Hold the line	46	40	40
Negotiate and get out	35	23	20
Carry fighting into North Vietnam	12	17	20
Not sure	7	20	20

Based on these responses to the February 22 Harris Survey, it would appear that McGeorge Bundy was correct in suggesting in point four of his memorandum of February 9 that public support for a continuation of U.S. efforts in Vietnam was not as firm as the Gallup poll responses on February 13 would seem to have indicated, even though the percentage of those who wanted to "hold the line" was higher in the February Harris Survey than in previous Harris surveys. There was considerable support for negotiating and

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[85] *The Gallup Poll*, vol. 3, p. 1929. The question about nuclear war was not repeated, but respondents were asked for their opinion on seeking a negotiated settlement:

"It has been suggested that President Johnson try to arrange a conference with leaders of Southeast Asia and China to see if a peace agreement can be worked out. Would you like to see President Johnson call such a meeting, or not?"

	Percent
Yes	81
No	11
No opinion	8

[86] The wording of the alternative—"carry the war into North Vietnam. . . ."—may have been confusing to respondents, who could have been uncertain as to whether this referred to air and sea bombardment only or to an invasion with ground forces.

getting out, and the percentage of those favoring that alternative had increased substantially by February. Similarly, there was less support in February for carrying the fighting into North Vietnam.

The response to another question on the February 22 Harris survey, by a margin of 4 to 3, was that the U.S. should restrict bombing to the southern part of North Vietnam rather than bombing all of the North. "It is perfectly evident," Harris said, "that the American people do not want to see the war extended to North Vietnam. The main reason is that they do not want any provocation that would bring Red China into the fighting with their own troops and planes. By almost 3 to 1, people believe that taking the war to North Vietnam would bring the Chinese directly into the fighting. And this, quite clearly, the people do not want to see happen, for as many put it, such action would produce a 'big war' between the United States and China." [87]

In his report on February 22 Harris concluded:[88]

> The clear mainstream of America opinion is this: We should shore up the efforts of the South Vietnamese to resist further Communist advances, use retaliatory airstrikes only when extreme guerrilla activity warrants it, and when we have made enough show of power so that the Communists can see that we will not yield, then finally negotiate a settlement.

A week before the publication of the February 22 Harris survey, Bill Moyers sent the President a memorandum saying, "Attached are the results of the poll I mentioned to you last night. Lou Harris asks that we not let anyone know he did it for us." [89] It is not clear whether the White House had asked Harris for the poll or whether Harris made the results of the February 22 Survey available to the White House in advance of its publication.

The poll results which Harris gave to the White House contain some questions and answers which were not included in the published report of the February 22 Harris Survey, several of which are of interest.

One question provided further evidence of the "rally-round-the-flag effect":

> *"How do you think the President is handling the situation in Vietnam?"*

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[87] The *Washington Post* article on February 22 does not give the wording of the question about bombing, nor does it provide the percentages of other responses.

While wanting to avoid war with China, a majority of the public believed, according to the same Harris survey, that China was principally responsible for instigating the attacks on Americans in South Vietnam:

"Do you feel that the recent attacks and killings of Americans soldiers stationed in South Vietnam are mainly part of the civil war in South Vietnam, or that the Communist government of North Vietnam is mainly behind them, or that the Chinese Communist government is mainly behind them?"

	Percent
Part of civil war in South Vietnam	7
North Vietnam behind them	26
China behind them	53
Not sure	14

[88] *Ibid.*

[89] Johnson Library, C.F. ND 19/CO 312.

[In percent]

	Positive	Negative
Before crisis [Pleiku and Qui Nhon]	41	59
Now	60	40

Another question was asked which does not appear to have been asked in any other poll taken during the war, and which provides important data on the public's perception of U.S. interests in relation to South Vietnam:

> *"What do you believe are the most important reasons for our being in Vietnam?"*

[In percent]

	Very Important	Moderately Important	Not Very Important	Unsure
To win victory over aggression	56	19	—	—[90]
To defend the security of the United States	63	15	14	8
To help a non-Communist nation resist Communism	66	18	9	7
To stop Communist infiltration	71	16	7	6
To keep the Communists from taking all of Southeast Asia	79	9	5	6[91]

When respondents were asked, however, about the importance of "fighting in Vietnam," their responses seem to indicate that they did not consider "fighting" to be that important. According to Moyers' memorandum, the questions and the answers were as follows:

> *"Do you feel fighting in Vietnam is"*

	Percent
Not very important	69
Moderately important	20
Very important	6
Unsure	5

On the other hand respondents strongly favored negotiations:

> *"Do you favor the United States asking for negotiations to settle the war in Vietnam?"*

	Percent
Yes	75
No	20
Unsure	5[92]

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[90] These two missing figures were not provided in Moyers' memorandum.

[91] This was the question which was asked, at least in the version of the poll which was given to the White House, immediately prior to the question in the February 22 Harris Survey which has been cited above: *"From what you have read or heard, in your opinion do you think if we now withdrew from Vietnam, the Communists would take over all of Southeast Asia or do you feel that might not happen?"*

[92] In the February 22 published version of the survey, Harris explained why only 75 percent favored negotiations, while in the question about alternative courses of action (cited above) only 35 percent favored "negotiate and get out": "The difference between the 75 percent who say a negotiated settlement should be our ultimate objective and the 35 percent who say 'negotiate and get out' today is recognition by the people that negotiations can be conducted only from strength."

Finally, in the version of the Harris survey which was made available to the White House on February 15, this question was asked (it, too, was not in the published report):

"Do you favor sending a large number of American troops to help save South Vietnam?"

	Percent
Yes	48
No	40
Unsure	12

Retaliation for the Attack at Qui Nhon

On February 10, the Communists raided a U.S. base at Qui Nhon, and the NSC met from 1:30 p.m to 4:04 p.m.[93] Attending were the President, McNamara, Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Vance, McNaughton, Adm. David L. McDonald (Chief of Naval Operations) representing the JCS, William Bundy, Thompson, Unger, McCone, Dillon, and Rowan. Vice President Humphrey was also present. Congress was not represented. Present from the White House and NSC staffs were Reedy, Moyers, Smith and Cooper. Prior to the President's arrival at 2:07 p.m. the group discussed the situation,[94] and McGeorge Bundy then reported to the President that although there was a difference of opinion as to what the response should be, all of those present agreed that there should be a response.

Ball said that the reaction of the Russians to U.S. attacks on North Vietnam had been mild, but that U.S. action "puts heavy pressure on the Soviets," and that further attacks should be postponed until Kosygin returned home.

Llewellyn Thompson said that the U.S. objective should be to avoid a deeper commitment by the U.S.S.R. to North Vietnam. He pointed out that if the Chinese air force should become involved as a result of U.S. attacks, "very heavy pressure is put on the Soviets to come to the aid of the Vietnamese."

Douglas Dillon said he did not believe that the Russians would make a major policy decision "based on the whereabouts of Kosygin." [95]

McGeorge Bundy said that the U.S. could not be put in the position ". . . of giving the Russians control over our actions by their moving Soviet diplomats from one place to another. If we take no action, the Soviets may think we are in fact a paper tiger."

McCone said that to base U.S. action on a possible reaction by the U.S.S.R. would be to lose sight of the U.S. objective of helping to defend the South Vietnamese against aggression.

Based on recommendations from Taylor, Westmoreland, and the JCS, McNamara recommended an immediate retaliatory airstrike by U.S. planes on two targets in the southern part of North Vietnam and another attack by the South Vietnamese on one additional target. The U.S. would soon be faced, he said, with conducting

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[93] Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings File, Summary Record of National Security Council Meeting No. 548, Feb. 10, 1965. Some portions of this document were excised when it was released in 1980, but in 1988 the entire document was declassified.

[94] Notes on this preliminary meeting were taken by Chester Cooper and are in the Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[95] In his letter to Professor Greenstein on Mar. 18, 1988, cited above, Dillon's explanation is that he was "not scared of Soviet reaction unless they were directly attacked or threatened which was clearly not the case in Vietnam."

Phase II actions ("sustained reprisal") "even though there are no incidents created by the Viet Cong," but the Qui Nhon attack "provides us with an opportunity today to retaliate immediately."

McGeorge Bundy recommended against public disclosure of the beginning of continuing action. He said that in making the shift from Phase I to Phase II, ". . . at an appropriate time we could publicly announce that we had turned a corner and changed our policy but that no mention should be made now of such a decision." The President, apparently agreeing, added that it was important, in this respect, to prevent leaks to the press.

The President then went around the table asking each person whether he favored a retaliatory strike. Only two, Vice President Humphrey and Llewellyn Thompson, indicated reservations. (According to the notes of the meeting, Bill Moyers "said he thought the strike should be made to meet domestic public opinion requirements.") Thompson recommended that because Kosygin was still in Hanoi the strike should be delayed for a few days, and that meanwhile the U.S. should warn the North Vietnamese that unless they ceased their aggressive actions they would be subjected to U.S. air attacks. If they did not, Phase II could then begin. Ball, Acting Secretary of State in the absence of Rusk, apparently did not express an opinion except to say that the U.S. should be "cautious," and that the proposed airstrike should be limited to two targets. McNamara said that the military wanted to include a third target—a bridge further to the north and closer to Hanoi than the other two targets—but that he would agree to delete the bridge.

Vice President Humphrey said that he, too, had some doubts about conducting the proposed airstrike while Kosygin was still in the area.[96]

At the conclusion of the meeting, the President approved a retaliatory airstrike on two targets (excluding the bridge) in the southern part of North Vietnam (FLAMING DART II, which was carried out on February 11).

Once again there was the question of whether or not to involve Congress in the decision. The notes of the meeting state only: "The President raised the question as to whether there should be Congressional consultation."

The President asked the group whether he should make a statement on television without revealing the fact that the U.S. was moving into Phase II, but he "indicated his reluctance to state again what he had said many times previously," and no one in the group appears to have disagreed. "The consensus was that we should not spell out in detail exactly what we had undertaken to do." As McGeorge Bundy had said during the meeting, that could be done later.[97]

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[96] According to one account, President Johnson "summarily disregarded" Humphrey's remarks. See the article by Laurence Stern in the *Washington Post*, May 9, 1976, which was based in part on comments made to Stern by Thomas L. Hughes. Humphrey's former assistant, who was then (1965) Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the Department of State.

In his memoirs, Humphrey said he talked to several of the President's top advisers who said they agreed with his opposition to bombing the North, especially Hanoi. "Yet when Johnson went around the table," Humphrey said, "starting with Dean Rusk, Rusk said he thought we should bomb. Then he turned to me, 'Hubert, what do you think?' I said, 'I don't think we should.' Then Johnson turned to McNamara, who agreed with Rusk that we should. I ended up the only dissenting vote. My prelunch allies had disappeared." Hubert H. Humphrey, *The Education of a Public Man*, Norman Sherman (ed.) (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), p. 319. Humphrey did not give the date of the meeting at which this happened. Rusk was ill and did not attend the February 10 meeting.

That evening (February 10), from 6:25 p.m. to 7:40 p.m., the President dealt with the question of "congressional consultation" by holding a very private, off-the-record meeting with nine Members of Congress from both parties. Present were eight Democrats: Mansfield, Fulbright, George A. Smathers of Florida (then the Secretary of the Senate Democratic Conference), Speaker McCormack, and Representatives Carl B. Albert (Okla.), the majority leader, Hale Boggs (La.), majority whip, George H. Mahon (Tex.), chairman of the Appropriations Committee, and L. Mendel Rivers (S.C.), chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and only one Republican, Senator Thomas H. Kuchel (Calif.), the Republican whip and a loyal supporter of Johnson's Vietnam policy. Other Republican leaders were out of Washington attending Lincoln's birthday events. Also present were the Vice President, McNamara, Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Adm. David McDonald, McCone, O'Brien, Valenti and Marvin W. Watson (White House Chief of Staff).

Apparently there are no notes on the meeting except for this report dictated to one of the President's secretaries by O'Brien:[98]

> The President called upon George Ball, in the absence of Dean Rusk, Bob McNamara, John McCone, and Mac Bundy to comment briefly and concisely on the problem currently. He called on Admiral McDonald to comment on the military aspect of the problem currently. He solicited views and opened

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[97] The notes of the meeting do not indicate that there was any discussion of the legal basis for U.S. action against North Vietnam under Phase II. In the State Department, however, a memorandum on the subject was prepared the next day by the Legal Adviser's office after the White House had begun to get press inquiries on the subject: Leonard C. Meeker, "Legal Basis for United States and South Vietnamese Air Strikes," with cover memorandum for Secretary Rusk from Meeker, Feb. 11, 1965. U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S. The memorandum argued that Communist attacks on Pleiku and Qui Nhon were "part of a continuing armed aggression directed by North Vietnam against South Vietnam in violation of international agreements and international law. . . . Under international law, the victim of armed aggression is obviously permitted to defend itself and to organize a collective self-defense effort in which others who are willing may join."

On March 1, 1965, Meeker's office prepared a memorandum, "Declaration of War and the Vietnam Crisis" (same location), which argued that there was no legal necessity, national or international, for a declaration of war, and that a declaration would be politically and psychologically detrimental to U.S. interests. In the absence of a declaration, the memorandum said, international rules of conduct would apply to "hostilities of an international character," and the U.S. would have the rights of a belligerent (such as blockading). A declaration, on the other hand, would place the U.S. "in a most embarrassing position of being the first nation to declare war since the formulation of the [U.N.] Charter. We would be opening ourselves to universal condemnation." Moreover, without a declaration there was a better chance of keeping the war localized. A declaration could encourage Communist countries to declare war on the U.S., and "would provide the North Vietnamese with a powerful lever which they could use to bring the Russians and Chinese into the fighting."

Domestically, the President's powers were "extremely broad," and "there was nothing to be gained by a U.S. declaration of war." Moreover, "A declaration of war would cause grave domestic concern. The act of declaring war is of so great finality that such an action would be received with more fear than is desirable or necessary."

On March 8, Carl F. Salans, the Legal Adviser for the Far East Bureau of the State Department, prepared a memorandum, "Legal Basis for United States Actions Against North Vietnam" (same location), which was cleared by Meeker and sent to all diplomatic posts. A copy was also sent to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and in a note from Carl Marcy, the chief of staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to Senator Morse, Marcy who, like Morse, was a lawyer, called it "about the sloppiest piece of legal work I have ever seen." "I think you might want to ask," he told Morse, "whether this is a formal legal opinion of the Legal Adviser of the Department of State. It sounds to me like it was put together by a high school student." National Archives, RG 46, Marcy Chron File, Marcy to Morse, Mar. 17, 1965, transmitting a copy of the March 8 memorandum.

[98] Johnson Library, White House Daily Diary, Feb. 10, 1965.

> the meeting to questions. Senator Kuchel questioned McGeorge Bundy briefly by way of clarification of Bundy's remarks—was nothing unusual, was rather routine. Senator Fulbright engaged in a discussion that involved Bundy and McNamara which he questioned McNamara on the feasibility of any retaliatory attack or any kind of military action involving the mainland of China. This was . . . dismissed out of hand. [ellipsis in original] Fulbright prefaced this question by saying, "I'm going to ask what I am sure will be considered a foolish question," and that was the only spot during the meeting where there was anything in the way of vigorous exchange of views because the President's advisors answered Fulbright directly and completely and objected to any consideration such as he envisioned. The President in turn asked the . . . oh, Mendel Rivers posed questions to Admiral McDonald on the military action phase of the problem and asked him for some specifics . . . hardware and procedures that he felt that could or would be followed militarily. He based his questions for the most part on the previous comments that had been made by McDonald in Rivers' Committee. This seemed to be a pursuit of a subject that had been taken up between the two of them at a prior date. The Speaker commented very briefly by way of stating that the President and his advisors were following the right course and the only course. Carl Albert, George Smathers, and George Mahon were asked if they cared to comment. They declined. The Vice President made a brief comment along the same lines as the Speaker's comment. Senator Mansfield was asked if he cared to comment. He declined to comment. He had a memo that was in his hand—I sat next to him, and I thought he would comment off the memo, but he apparently decided at the last second not to bring the memo into discussion at the meeting so he placed it in an envelope and gave it to Jack Valenti for direct delivery to the President. The President urged the group to avoid any discussion of the meeting, and that if it was learned that a meeting took place, they would have to limit themselves to simply saying it was an informal group of leaders gathered to hear a report from McGeorge Bundy on his trip.

In the February 10 memorandum to the President which he had brought to the meeting, Mansfield commented specifically on what the U.S. should expect after the Qui Nhon attack:[99]

> (1) Anticipate that the Communist defenses against air-attacks in the North have already been and will continue to be strengthened since the last attack.
>
> (2) Anticipate that another retaliation on our part now will not cool off the situation—that much should now be clear. Rather it is likely to lead to a further Viet Cong response in South Vietnam. Therefore, it would be unwise to undertake any retaliation without the full expectation of the response.
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> (3) Anticipate, further, that the next Viet Cong retaliation is not going to be to fly Migs into Hawk missiles—that would be

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[99] Johnson Library, NSF Name File, Mansfield.

> pitting their weakness against our strength. They are not fools and they are not going to play the game as fools. They are going to continue to play their strength against our weakness. Our weakness is on the ground in Viet Nam, where isolated pockets of Americans are surrounded by, at best, an indifferent population and, more likely, by an increasingly hostile population.
>
> (4) Anticipate that we can count on the South Vietnamese people for less, rather than more, help as the tit-for-tat pattern develops. In a matter of weeks or months it will become unlikely that any of the present United States installations outside of Saigon will be really secure against the Viet Cong. If we are to minimize repetitions of the recent American blood-lettings, therefore, the outposts will have to be *vastly strengthened by American forces* or pulled into and consolidated in the Saigon area. The timing of any further retaliation against the north, if that is the decision, should take cognizance of this factor. (emphasis in original)

Mansfield suggested that if the U.S. retaliated for the attack on Qui Nhon it should at the same time seek to have the 1954 Geneva Conference reopened in an effort to obtain a cease-fire in Vietnam.

This was McGeorge Bundy's reply to Mansfield, on behalf of the President, on the following day (February 11):[100]

> 1. We of course are watching the Communist defenses against air attack with great care, and all missions are designed in the light of the most up-to-date information we can get. You are entirely right in believing that this question of Communist air defenses is of critical importance.
>
> 2. It is not our current expectation that any single retaliation can be expected at this stage to cool off the situation. It is clear that for the immediate future the Vietnamese Communists will try as hard as they can to show that they have more determination than we. The choice we are facing, however, is the choice between making a reply and not making one, and it is in that framework that the President's decision was made. As he said last night, the action taken today is designed to be prompt, adequate, and measured.
>
> 3. There is no question that Americans on the ground in Vietnam face the prospect of harassment by the Viet Cong. The Pleiku incident makes it clear that they faced that prospect before our current replies were begun, and as I said in my last letter, it is obviously of high importance that our commanders out there should do everything they can to take all the precautionary measures that they can against such harassment. Nevertheless, you are quite right in pointing to this as a continuing problem.
>
> 4. Only the future can tell what the long-term reaction of the South Vietnamese people may be, but it seems to us much too soon to reach your pessimistic conclusion that the help from the South Vietnamese will decrease if a tit-for-tat pattern develops. We shall certainly be doing all that we can to pre-

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[100] Same location.

> vent such a result, and as the President remarked last night, the most important single thing which we can do is to avoid an appearance that the American people are looking for an easy way out in Vietnam.
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> 5. The problem of possible international conferences is a most important and interesting one, and so is the question of the terms which we set as a part of any possible future discussions. I am not sure just what you mean by a "call for a cease-fire." If the cease-fire were to apply to all forces in South Vietnam, it would seem to me to be an effort to apply equal standards to the cops and to the robbers; but if it is a matter of saying that any replies we make in the North can be stopped the minute there is an end to the aggression in the South, I can see great merit in it.

On February 11, Senator Claiborne Pell inserted in the *Congressional Record* a brief statement by Mansfield on the need for negotiations, and Pell said, among other things:[101]

> We are presently engaged in a war that appears as if it can only be won either by massive commitment of American soldiers ashore or by permitting escalation into nuclear warfare. I query whether our vital interests in that part of the world are equal to these alternatives. Nor, do I believe, can we pull out at this time.
>
> Accordingly, I believe we must continue to hold on, seeking to arrive at a point where we can honorably negotiate a reasonable, solid, and forceful agreement that meets the interests of the Geneva powers, of ourselves, and, most important, of the Vietnamese people.

Pell added:

> . . . at this time of decision and self-examination, I think it would be a great mistake if we withdrew from our present position, leaving a vacuum. To my mind we have no alternative but to show our determination and hold on as we are, seeking and probing for some reasonably solid and acceptable agreement.

Meanwhile, Senate Republican Leader Dirksen, who was in Illinois when the President met with the leadership on February 10, said on February 11 that he had talked with the President by telephone, and that Johnson seemed "very annoyed at the disagreement of some Democratic leaders." Dirksen told Johnson that he agreed with his decision. "We have no other choice," he said. The alternative was "losing face with the world." [102]

That same day, former Vice President Richard M. Nixon said in a speech in Los Angeles: "This is no time for consensus government. It's a time for leadership." The U.S. should stop simply reacting, he said, and begin attacking Communist supply lines into South Vietnam.[103]

Speaking for the American Friends of Vietnam (a national organization created in 1955 to support U.S. policy in Vietnam), of which he was chairman, Professor Wesley R. Fishel of Michigan

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[101] *CR*, vol. 111, p. 2619.

[102] *New York Times*, Feb. 12, 1965.

[103] *Ibid.*

State University[104] on February 10 telephoned Lewis G. Sarris, a veteran State Department intelligence analyst on Vietnam, who, at Fishel's request, notified the White House that the AFV was preparing to issue a statement urging retaliation against North Vietnam and the use of U.S. troops to counter infiltration, as well as a broad economic, social and political program for Southeast Asia. "If the U.S. [Government] did not respond favorably to these proposals," Sarris reported, "his [Fishel's] group . . . would proceed publishing highly critical articles on US policy in South Vietnam."[105]

The President Approves Sustained Reprisal ("Continuing Action")

On February 11, as requested by McNamara on February 8, the JCS proposed an eight-week schedule of airstrikes together with the continuation of existing 34-A operations, resumption of DE SOTO patrols, and authorization of cross-border patrols. They also proposed, as a means of deterring Communist retaliation and for U.S. base security, the deployment of a U.S. Marine brigade to Danang and an Army infantry brigade to Thailand.[106]

Pursuant to McNamara's directions to the JCS when he requested their recommendations, the eight-week airstrike plan was much more limited than the plan proposed by the JCS in November 1964. Rather than a massive campaign to destroy all of the 94 targets on the list which had been developed in May 1964, the eight-week plan would have been restricted to attacking four targets a week, largely south of the 19th parallel.

In their memorandum, the Chiefs took the position that while the program they proposed, ". . . almost certainly would not lead Hanoi to restrain the Viet Cong . . . if the United States persevered in the face of threats and international pressures, and as the degree of damage inflicted on North Vietnam increased, the chances of a reduction in Viet Cong activity would rise." "It is the opinion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff," the memorandum concluded, "that the program herein proposed will demonstrate to the DRV that continuation of its direction and support of insurgencies will lead progressively to more serious punishment." It added: "If the insurgency continues with active DRV support, strikes against the DRV will be extended with intensified efforts against targets north of the 19th parallel."

The memorandum also predicted that if the U.S. were to carry out the proposed program, the Chinese and the Russians would step up their aid to North Vietnam:

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[104] For Fishel's role in Vietnam in the 1950s see pt. I of this study. The author of another recent study has stated that Fishel was a former CIA station chief in Saigon. See Charles DeBenedetti, "Lyndon Johnson and the Antiwar Opposition," ch. 2 in Robert A. Divine (ed.), *The Johnson Years*, vol. 2 (Lawrence: Univ. Press of Kansas, 1987), p. 36. Although it is clear that Fishel had been actively involved with the CIA, the details of that relationship are not known, and there is no confirmation from any other source that Fishel was a CIA station chief.

[105] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[106] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, JCSM-100-65, pp. 318-320. See also the analysis on pp. 431-433. As of 1965, there were approximately 5,000 Marines in a brigade (3 or 4 battalions) and approximately 4,000-4,500 soldiers in an Army infantry brigade (3 or 4 battalions), not counting the accompanying support forces, such as artillery, engineers, helicopters. The size and composition of support forces varied in each case. As of 1965, an infantry division usually consisted of three brigades (10-12 battalions) containing a total of approximately 15,000 soldiers or Marines (including headquarters and other staffs) exclusive of support forces. With support forces, a division could include as many as 30,000-40,000 troops.

> . . . the Chinese communists would be reluctant to become directly involved in the fighting in Southeast Asia; however as the number and severity of U.S. attacks against the DRV increase, they probably would feel an increased compulsion to take some dramatic action to counter the impact of US pressures. There is a fair chance that Peiping would introduce limited numbers of Chinese ground forces as "volunteers" into North Vietnam, and/or northern Laos, intending to raise the specter of further escalation, to underline its commitment to assist the North Vietnamese, and to challenge the Soviets to extend corresponding support. They [the Chiefs] also believe that the probable Soviet response to these US courses of action would consist both of a vigorous diplomatic and propaganda effort to bring the United States to the conference table and the provisions of military support to North Vietnam. While the extent and nature of the latter are difficult to predict, it also certainly would include anti-aircraft artillery and radar. In order to provide a more effective defense against the US air attacks, North Vietnam would probably press for surface-to-air missiles [SAMs]. The chances are about even that the Soviets would agree to provide some SA-2 [SAM] defenses. . . .

Although the JCS recommendations were unanimous, there was in fact, a "very deep split" between the services, as Gen. Bruce B. Palmer, Jr., has observed:[107]

> The Army did not agree that bombing North Vietnam would produce the desired results, and the Navy wasn't too sure about it. It was the Air Force and the Marine Corps that were the tough proponents of air power. It was General Wheeler [Chairman of the JCS] who talked the other Chiefs into submitting an agreed paper on the theory that if we submitted a split paper this would hand over a basic military judgment to the secretary of defense and put him in a difficult spot of having to make the decision, him and the President.

"Where I fault ourselves," Palmer says, referring to Army policymakers, "was to agree, in a JCS decision to go ahead and try these things anyway . . . to 'see' if they could work. . . ." [108]

General Westmoreland was opposed to sustained bombing prior to the introduction of U.S. ground forces, but he recognized its political value, as he explained in an interview some years later:[109]

> I frankly did not support the bombing campaign, in principle, until actually '66 when I had a logistic organization in place and had enough troops to protect ourselves if they did come down with massive armies, because I was afraid that it would be provocative. However, I did go in for the tit-for-tat. If they shelled Pleiku, we would hit a military target up there; if they sabotaged the hotel, we would inflict counterpart damage on them. But, at that time I was not for a sustained bombing

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[107] John Schlight (ed.), *The Second Indochina War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1986, for the Center of Military History, Department of the Army), p. 154. See also Palmer's comments in his book, *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam* (Lexington: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1984) pp. 34-35.

[108] Interview with Gen. Bruce Palmer, Jr., 1975, Senior Officer Oral History Program, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

[109] CRS Interview with William Westmoreland, Nov. 15, 1978.

> campaign. However, the bombing campaign had another dimension which frankly was the thought that prevailed. We had to do something to shore up the South Vietnamese politically, to demonstrate to them that we were behind them and to help give them confidence, because some of them were beginning to waiver and were beginning to wonder what we were doing there. Were we there in name only as a political ploy or were we there in fact to help them protect themselves? And the psychological value of the bombing became an element and a very substantial one.

In a Special National Intelligence Estimate in mid-February 1965, the U.S. Intelligence Board concluded that sustained bombing of the North would probably not cause the North Vietnamese to cease supporting the insurgency in the South or to abandon its goal of unifying all of Vietnam under Communist rule.[110] They might, in fact, decide to intensify the struggle in the South, "accepting the destructive consequences in the North in the expectation of early victory in the south." Rather than intensifying the struggle, it was "somewhat more likely" that they would "decide to make some effort to secure a respite from US air attack, especially if the US had indicated that such a respite would follow a sharp reduction of Viet Cong activity." [111]

Nor would sustained air attacks on the North cause the Communists in the South to cease their attacks: "Viet Cong attacks would probably continue, though not necessarily at a steady pace."

As for the Russians, they would increase their support to the North Vietnamese, thus making the latter "somewhat more confident and aggressive." [112]

The reaction of the Chinese would be to support a militant response by the North Vietnamese. The Chinese would probably also assume that whichever choice the Russians made would undermine the strength of the U.S.S.R. and increase that of China with other Communist countries. Even though increased Russian assistance might diminish China's influence in Hanoi, it would help China by deterring the U.S., as well as by constituting an endorsement of Chinese policy toward North Vietnam. If the Russians did not help the North Vietnamese they would tend to be viewed as "'faint-hearted' in their devotion to Communist duty."

On Sunday, February 13, 1965, the President met from 1:56 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. with McNamara, Ball, McGeorge Bundy and David K. E. Bruce, U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, and gave final approval to continuing action (sustained retaliation) against North Vietnam. There are apparently no notes on the meeting,[113] but one of the subjects of discussion, and the reason for Bruce's presence, was the possibility that the British and the Russians, as co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954,[114] might reconvene that conference for further consideration of a settlement of the Vietnam conflict. (On February 7, the British had reported to the U.S. that the Russians had suggested such a possibility.)

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[110] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, SNIE 10-3/1-65, Feb. 18, 1965, "Communist Reactions to Possible US Courses of Action Against North Vietnam."

[111] The State Department intelligence staff disagreed with this conclusion on the grounds that, ". . . any benefits to be gained by such a respite would be more than offset by a loss of momentum at a time when victory appeared near, by a loss of face with the VC, and by the consequent bolstering of US/GVN morale." *Ibid.* State thought that rather than seeking a respite, the North Vietnamese were more likely to intensify the struggle.

[112] For an assessment of the position of the U.S.S.R. on Vietnam at the time, see Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Moscow to Washington 2569, Mar. 2, 1965.

[113] In McGeorge Bundy's papers in the Johnson Library there is one page of handwritten notes on this meeting, but they are too cursory to be of any value.

There was no public announcement of the President's approval of continuing action against the North. After the meeting, Taylor was informed by a State Department cable which had been drafted in the White House:[115]

> 1. We will intensify by all available means the program of pacification within SVN.
>
> 2. We will execute a program of measured and limited air action jointly with GVN against selected military targets in DRV remaining south of 19th parallel until further notice.
>
> 3. We will announce this policy of measured action in general terms and at the same time, we will go to UN Security Council to make clear case that aggressor is Hanoi. We will also make it plain that we are ready and eager for "talks" to bring aggression to an end.

The cable added that it was "essential" to take the issue to the U.N. Security Council "if we are to avoid being faced with really damaging initiatives by the USSR or perhaps by such powers as India, France, or even the UN." Such a move would also have the advantage of inducing the North Vietnamese to appear at the U.N., and if they did not do so the U.S. would then be in an even stronger position to take military action. The cable added, however, that the U.S. would continue military actions during diplomatic discussions or negotiations until such time as the North Vietnamese ceased infiltration and all other forms of support for the Communists in the South.

Also included in the cable was the draft of a Presidential statement which was "under consideration" (but was never used) by which these points would be publicly announced.[116]

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[114] See pt. I of this study.

[115] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Washington to Saigon 1718, Feb. 13, 1965. For Taylor's response, see Saigon to Washington 2583, Feb. 14, and 2588, Feb. 15, 1965, same location.

[116] Reflecting some of the concerns being expressed privately and publicly in Washington, James Reston, prominent *New York Times* columnist, urged the President to speak out. In his column from Washington which was printed in the *Times* on February 12, he said:

"The first casualty in every shooting war is common sense and the second is free and open discussion.

"An extraordinary situation now exists in Vietnam. A conscripted American armed force is now engaged in increasingly severe air raids in North Vietnam without even a speech by the President in explanation of his present thinking on the crisis.

"The big black limousines arrive and depart from the White House. Brief statements are issued by press officers on the latest military operations and casualties. Influential legislators express the gravest apprehension in private about the trend of events, but most of them remain silent on the floor of Congress.

"Meanwhile, the propaganda machine is beginning to turn over, the front pages are filling up with pictures of the American wounded and those almost meaningless aerial photographs of villages burning in the jungle."

". . . The least the President can do," Reston said, "is to go before the country and explain his objectives."

On February 14, Reston wrote: "The time has come to call a spade a bloody shovel. This country is in an undeclared and unexplained war in Vietnam. Our masters have a lot of long and fancy names for it, like escalation and retaliation, but it is war just the same." Reston added: "Very few people have questioned the necessity for a limited expansion of the war by U.S.

Continued

During the meeting on February 13, Ball discussed a memorandum to the President which he had prepared for himself and Llewellyn Thompson, pointing out the dangers of continuing airstrikes against the North.[117] Except for certain major differences, which were stated in the memorandum, Ball said that it also expressed the views of McNamara and McGeorge Bundy. In his memoirs, Ball said that he associated McNamara and Bundy with the memorandum "to shake up the President and smoke out my colleagues." [118]

"We cannot long continue air strikes against North Vietnam," the Ball-Thompson memorandum said, "without facing the likelihood of engagement with the 53 Chinese MIGs sent to Hanoi to defend North Vietnam. . . . In our air strikes to date, we have hit targets up to sixty miles north of the 17th parallel. At some point—if we close the remaining gap of 250 miles to Hanoi—engagement by United States planes with the 53 MIGs sent to Hanoi will become inevitable. . . . Once our planes have been engaged heavily by MIG aircraft, you will be compelled—in order to prevent unacceptable losses—to face the decision to mount an air effort to eliminate the major MIG base at Phuc Yen, near Hanoi. This base is heavily defended. Some parts of the base are near populated areas. Any effective strike against it would require a massive air effort."

Moreover, the memorandum said, if the U.S. bombed targets in or near the cities of Hanoi and Haiphong, that "will be likely at some point to trigger a DRV ground force move South," which could involve 135,000 troops and "substantial increases" in U.S. forces to block such an attack.

U.S. air action above the 19th parallel could also provoke the Chinese into using their air force to attack U.S. aircraft, and if this happened, Ball and Thompson said, "you [the President] would be under considerable pressure to order United States forces to knock out offending Chinese bases—and even to strike at Chinese nuclear production installations." If the U.S. attacked Chinese air bases, the Chinese might react by sending ground forces into North Vietnam, and then into Laos, South Vietnam and possibly Thailand. If this happened, the U.S. "would be compelled to make a major effort to stop them." This would require deployment of 300,000 U.S. forces in South Vietnam. War between U.S. and Chinese forces would raise the question of using nuclear weapons against the Chinese, and the use of such weapons ". . . would obviously raise the most profound political problems. Not only would their use generate probably irresistible pressures for a major Soviet involvement, but the United States would be vulnerable to the charge that it was willing to use nuclear weapons against non-whites only."

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bombers into Communist territory," but the danger, he said, was that this could lead to a major conflict in Asia for which the U.S. was not prepared and would have difficulty fighting successfully. Noting again that Johnson had not spoken on U.S. policy in Vietnam since the beginning of increased U.S. military activity, Reston said that the President could "forget about his Great Society if he gets bogged down in a major land war in Asia on territory favorable to the enemy." He concluded: "Somebody . . . has to make a move to reverse the trend and stop the present crooked course. For the moment, we seem to be standing mute in Washington, paralyzed before a great issue, and merely digging our thought deeper into the accustomed military rut."

[117] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[118] Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, p. 391.

If the war escalated, it was "highly likely" that the U.S.S.R. would increase its aid to North Vietnam and China. It might also harass the U.S. in other ways and places. "At the very least, progress toward improvement of United States-Soviet relations would be severely set back. Moreover, we could look forward to a substantial deterioration in the evolution of the [Communist] Bloc toward a reduction of tensions and the development of a system more compatible with that of the West."

Escalation of the war, the memorandum said, would also increase pressures for negotiations, and this could lead to an international conference "with no preconditions—before we had built up sufficient bargaining power."

Ball and Thompson explained in the memorandum that while they were concerned about the possibility that bombing could lead to a war with China, they did not disagree with the plan for sustained reprisal:

> Ball and Thompson have supported the air strikes that have so far taken place and they would support a program of gradually increasing military pressure. They believe that only in this way can the United States achieve a bargaining position that can make possible an international arrangement that will effectively stop the insurrection in South Vietnam and deliver the entire country south of the Seventeenth Parallel to the government in Saigon free and clear of insurgency. They consider that the most we can realistically expect from any international arrangement are measures to stop the infiltration so that we may be able, over time, to reduce our commitments. Hopefully the military actions preceding such an arrangement would have created a sufficient sense of unity in Saigon to make it possible for the South Vietnamese Government—with diminishing United States help—to clean up an insurgency that had become manageable by the shutting of the borders.

The memorandum described the differences between the Ball-Thompson viewpoint and that of McNamara and McGeorge Bundy:

> McNamara-Bundy Position
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> McNamara and Bundy believe that we must pursue a course of increasing military pressure to the point where Hanoi is prepared to agree not only to stop infiltration from the North, but effectively to call off the insurgency in the South and withdraw those elements infiltrated in the past. To achieve this objective they would accept the risks of substantial escalation, including the acceptance of ground warfare with Red China—although they believe it likely that we can achieve the desired objective without such a war. This view is shared by Maxwell Taylor.
>
> Ball-Thompson Position
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> Ball and Thompson believe that—short of a crushing military defeat—Hanoi would never abandon the aggressive course it has pursued at great cost for ten years and give up all the progress it has made in the Communization of South Vietnam. For North Vietnam to call off the insurgency in South Vietnam, close the border, and withdraw the elements it has infiltrated into that country would mean that it had accepted unconditional surrender.

> Ball and Thompson believe that Red China would be extremely reluctant to permit Hanoi to suffer such unconditional surrender since it would mean the collapse of the basic Chinese ideological position which they have been disputing with the Soviets. Peiping would thus be under great pressure to engage the United States on the ground as well as in the air.
>
> Ball and Thompson believe that the Chinese decision to intervene on the ground would, in the final analysis, probably depend largely on the extent to which Peiping felt assured of Soviet support. There is no way that we can safely predict whether or not such support would be forthcoming. They are convinced, however, that the risks of Chinese ground intervention would be great and the costs of such intervention tremendous—particularly since the very taking of this step by Peiping would presumably imply substantial Soviet involvement, perhaps even to the point of a large-scale Soviet-US confrontation.

McGeorge Bundy, however, did not agree with Ball's statement of the McNamara-Bundy position, and on the copy of the memorandum which he received he noted by hand: "*Not* our view." (emphasis in original)[119]

In addition to discussing the military program, the Ball-Thompson memorandum proposed a "political program" as an "essential accompaniment to the military program,"

> a. To make clear to the world that our objectives are peace and freedom;
>
> b. To minimize the danger of MIG [Russian-made fighter plane] engagement and Chinese and Soviet involvement, giving the Soviets an alternative to support of Chinese militancy;
>
> c. To pre-empt a probable peace offensive by the Communists;
>
> d. To enable you to opt for a political settlement at any point where you determine that the risks of further military pressure have become prohibitive in the light of our over-all interests.

The proposed political program would consist of these steps: First, there would be a joint U.S.-South Vietnamese statement of war aims.[120] Based on this statement, the U.S. would take the

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[119] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces. In his memoir, Ball says: "His [McGeorge Bundy's] position—if I now properly recall his explanation—was that since 'we did not know what the answer [would] be,' we did not have 'to follow a particular course down the road to a particular result.' He was, in other words, qualifying our declared war aim of restoring South Vietnam to the *status quo ante* the Viet Cong insurgency, by opting to leave our objective unformulated and therefore flexible. Though I privately applauded his pragmatism, I could not agree that we should keep charging more deeply into the mire without clearly acknowledging where we were going and on what basis we would call a halt." Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, p. 505, fn. 8.

[120] This, Ball and Thompson said, should include the following:

"1. The two governments intend to continue to take all necessary military measures to stop the Communist aggression against the Republic of South Vietnam.

"2. Our joint and sole aim is to secure and maintain the political independence and territorial integrity of South Viet-Nam so as to permit it to develop its institutions and live in peace with its neighbors free from outside interference.

"3. The independence of South Viet-Nam requires the cessation of the guerrilla activities in South Viet-Nam directed and supplied from the North, the stopping of infiltration from the North, and the withdrawal of Viet Cong cadres previously infiltrated into South Viet-Nam.

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Vietnam issue to the U.N. Security Council. (This should be done ". . . as soon as possible—and we do not think that this can be delayed at the most for more than a week. . . .") Evidence should be submitted "to establish that the insurrection in South Vietnam is not an indigenous revolt but an insurgency imposed, directed, supplied and inspired from North Vietnam." The U.S. should call for establishment of peace under conditions that would assure the independence of South Vietnam, including "the halting of infiltration and the stopping of the direction and encouragement of the revolt from the North." Further, it should call for a cease-fire and an international conference of the U.S., the United Kingdom, France, the U.S.S.R., China, and North and South Vietnam, to negotiate such a settlement.

Both North and South Vietnam should be invited to join the Security Council discussion of the issue. North Vietnam would probably refuse, and the Chinese would probably join them in denouncing the idea, but the effect of going to the Security Council, while at the same time increasing U.S. military efforts, would be "to increase pressure on the Soviets to help put an end to the crisis by joining in a call for a ceasefire and a conference." It would also serve to preempt any move against the U.S. by the U.S.S.R. in the Security Council.

In his memoirs, Ball says that his memorandum "accomplished nothing." At the meeting on February 13, he said, the President ". . . read the memorandum quickly, then asked me to go through it point-by-point. He thanked me and handed the memorandum back without further comment." [121]

William Bundy, however, says that the memorandum, which was based in part on the views of one of the State Department's key China specialists, Allen S. Whiting, then Director of the Office of Research and Analysis for the Far East in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research,[122] was influential in persuading the President

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"4. South Vietnamese independence, which is the birthright of every nation, large and small, should be internationally guaranteed.

"5. Such a guarantee must be reinforced on the ground by peace-keeping machinery with enough strength and a sufficient mandate to assure that all parties to the agreement abide by their promises.

"6. This machinery can best be established under the aegis of the United Nations.

"7. Once these arrangements are carried out, the United States is prepared to withdraw its military forces from South Viet-Nam. (It must, of course, be made clear that any final arrangement should include the right of South Viet-Nam to call in assistance at a moment's notice if the United Nations' guarantee should prove inadequate.)"

[121] *The Past Has Another Pattern*, pp. 390-391. In interviews several years later, both Rusk and Ball commented on Ball's role as "Devil's Advocate." Ball said that the President used to call him "'my devil's advocate,'" and that he did so deliberately. After news of Ball's October 1964 memorandum was leaked to Joseph Alsop (see p. 91, fn. 125 below), Ball said, "I think he [the President] wanted it and I think they spread the word around the White House that, 'George Ball is just sort of doing this on an institutionalized basis, just always filing the brief for the other side.'" "Which was not the case," Ball added. Johnson Library, George Ball Oral History, Interview I (1971).

Rusk said that Ball, ". . . did not argue vigorously inside the government for a substantially different point of view. He was named by the President as the Devil's Advocate to take an opposing point of view. . . ." Interviewer: "Named by the President?" Rusk: "Named by the President. He was asked by the President to be a Devil's Advocate, and it may be that George Ball convinced himself in the process." Johnson Library, Dean Rusk Oral History, Interview II (1969).

[122] Whiting, who had carefully analyzed the Chinese decision to enter the Korean war and to engage American forces, (Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter The Korean War* [Palo Alto, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1968]) was engaged in monitoring and analyzing Chinese reactions to the situation in Vietnam, especially new military moves by the U.S. After

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to consider the "China factor" and to limit the bombing program, in particular to avoid bombing the airfield at Phuc Yen near Hanoi.[123]

Although Ball and Thompson had failed to convince the President, Ball made another attempt a few days later. On February 24, 1965, he had lunch with Bill Moyers and told him about his October 5, 1964 memorandum opposing the war.[124] Moyers gave the memorandum to the President that afternoon, and the next morning he called Ball to tell him that the President had read and reread the memorandum, and had " 'found it fascinating and wanted to know why he had not read it before.' "[125] On February 26, the

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the Gulf of Tonkin incidents in August 1964, he began to note various moves that seemed to indicate growing Chinese concern, such as the arrival in North Vietnam of a squadron of MiG fighters obtained from China, the reinforcement of Chinese airpower near the border, and the building of three new air fields in the border area, two of which appeared to be designed for possible use by the North Vietnamese. This was followed in January 1965 by joint Chinese-North Vietnamese air exercises. Although the Chinese did not react militarily to U.S. air attacks on North Vietnam in February 1965, these various moves suggested that they were seeking to deter the U.S. and to signal their intentions to act, if necessary, to protect their interests. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina*, pp. 175-177. Based on this evidence, Whiting warned that in order to avoid a repetition of the mistakes made in Korea, when the U.S. was not sensitive to Chinese efforts to signal their intentions to resist if U.S. forces approached their border, the U.S. should reciprocate by letting the Chinese know that the signals had been received and by exercising caution in the conduct of military operations in order not to violate, in Whiting's language, "sensitive political boundaries." Whiting explains the results (*ibid.*, pp. 222-223):

"Military actions were closely controlled by the White House in order to minimize the possibility of local field commanders willfully or inadvertently violating sensitive political boundaries. American pilots flying over North Vietnam were tracked from the south by radar. When they threatened to stray into prohibited areas near or over China, the pilots were warned in readily monitored English transmissions so as to alert Chinese defenses of a possible unauthorized overflight which should not be misinterpreted as a deliberately hostile act. Evidence of the PLA [People's Liberation Army] present in North Vietnam [by 1966, 50,000 PLA military personnel had moved into North Vietnam to assist with military construction, air defense, etc.] was publicly revealed so as to let Peking know of Washington's awareness that this signal had been received, but not exploited in any way which would prejudice the chances of avoiding a wider war.

"These measures carried costs and raised risks. The gradual American escalation with semipermanent sanctuaries provided time for Hanoi to improve its defenses and evacuate likely target areas, and allowed Peking to counter efforts at interdiction and isolation of the DRV. Alerting Chinese defenses to oncoming American planes facilitated shooting them down. Revealing the PLA activity in North Vietnam, including the presence of antiaircraft divisions, increased the risk of a Sino-American conflict from extremist pressures to reject all limitations on the fighting, including war with China if necessary.

"Yet despite these possible consequences, some hypothetical and some real, they were accepted in preference to the miscalculation and misperception that had spawned the Korean tragedy. That both sides interacted so belligerently without stumbling into war cannot be wholly fortuitous. On the contrary, the evidence suggests that the deliberate exercise of deterrence and the carefully calculated responses thereto succeeded in avoiding major Chinese involvement and an expansion of the war beyond the Indochinese borders. . . ."

[123] Phuc Yen was the major North Vietnamese air base. The argument was that if it were put out of operation, North Vietnamese air force planes might then begin using airfields in China, thus increasing the chances of a U.S.-China clash. As William Bundy said in a later memorandum, "As to the Phuc Yen airfield, we believe there is a significant chance that this [proposed] attack would cause Hanoi to assume that we were going to make their jet operational airfields progressively untenable. This could significantly and in itself increase the chances of their moving planes to China and all of the interacting possibilities that then arise." *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. IV, p. 168. Despite continuing recommendations from the military that the U.S. should bomb Phuc Yen, this was not done until November 1967.

[124] For a discussion of Ball's Oct. 5, 1964 memorandum, in which he explained his reasons for opposing further U.S. military involvement in the war, see pt. II., ch. 6 of this study.

[125] In October 1964, Ball had given copies of his memorandum to Rusk, McNamara and McGeorge Bundy, all of whom disagreed with him. Newspaper columnist Joseph Alsop learned of the memorandum and referred to it in one of his columns during October. The President, according to Ball, was "very upset" (Johnson Library, George Ball Oral History, Interview I [1971]) that Ball's dissent had been publicized, but apparently made no effort either at the time (during the political campaign) or later to read the paper, and apparently none of those with copies sent one to him.

President met with Ball, Rusk, McNamara and McGeorge Bundy to discuss the memorandum. This is Ball's description of the meeting:[126]

> That he [the President] had studied it was clear; he challenged specific points I had made and even remembered the page numbers where those arguments occurred. I outlined my position, and Secretary McNamara responded with a pyrotechnic display of facts and statistics to prove that I had overstated the difficulties we were now encountering, suggesting at least by nuance, that I was not only prejudiced but ill-informed. Secretary Rusk made a passionate argument about the dangers of not going forward. The meeting, though lasting a long while, ended on an inconclusive note. I had made no converts. My hope to force a systematic reexamination of our total situation had manifestly failed.

Vice President Humphrey also tried to dissuade the President from further escalation. He was not invited to the meeting on the 13th (although as a member by law of the NSC he was invited to an NSC meeting on the 18th), but he was apprised of what was happening by his former assistant, Thomas L. Hughes, who was then Director of Intelligence and Research in the State Department. Hughes telephoned Humphrey on the night of the 13th. "I told him the die was cast—that if there were any last opportunity to weigh in we would have to do so immediately." Humphrey, accompanied by Hughes, then flew on February 14 to Georgia on the private plane of Ford Bell, one of Humphrey's old friends and supporters from Minneapolis. At Bell's plantation, Humphrey read the latest documents which Hughes provided and they discussed what he should do. Although he said he was not sure that Johnson would listen, he decided to send him a memorandum, and to base it on what he thought would be his strongest appeal: the domestic political effects of further U.S. military involvement. "I can only talk to him," he told Hughes, "as a long-standing political ally."

This is the memorandum, drafted by Hughes on the plane trip back to Washington on February 15, which Humphrey, after making minor changes, sent to the President on February 17, 1965:[127]

> I have been in Georgia over the weekend, and for the first time since Inauguration, have had time to read and think about the fateful decisions which you have just been required to make, and will continue to be making, on Vietnam. I have been reading the Vietnam cables and intelligence estimates of the last two weeks. Because these may be the most fateful decisions of your Administration, I wanted to give you my personal views. You know that I have nothing but sympathy for you and complete understanding for the burden and the anguish which surrounds such decisions. There is obviously no quick or easy solution, and no clear course of right or wrong. Whatever you decide, we will be taking big historic gambles, and we

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[126] Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, p. 392. There apparently are no notes of the meeting.

[127] For the text of the memorandum, see Humphrey, *The Education of a Public Man*, pp. 320-324. For Hughes' role and the quotations from Humphrey see the article in the *Washington Post*, May 9, 1976, cited above. The author appreciates Thomas Hughes' assistance with this account.

won't know for sure whether they were right until months or perhaps years afterwards. The moral dilemmas are inescapable.

I want to put my comments in the most useful framework. In asking me to be your Vice President, you made it clear that you expected my loyalty, help, and support. I am determined to give it. I don't intend to second-guess your decisions, or kibbitz after the fact. You do not need me to analyze or interpret our information from Vietnam. You have a whole intelligence community for that purpose. You do not need me for foreign policy advice. You have a wise Secretary of State and whole staffs and departments to do that. I am not a military expert. Plenty of others are.

But because I have been privileged to share with you many years of political life in the Senate, because we have recently come through a successful national election together, because I think your respect for me and my value to you significantly consists of my ability to relate politics and policies, and because I believe strongly that the sustainability of the Vietnam policies now being decided are likely to profoundly affect the success of your Administration, I want to summarize my views on what I call the politics of Vietnam.

1. In the recent campaign, Goldwater and Nixon stressed the Vietnam issue, advocated escalation, and stood for a military "solution." The country was frightened by the trigger-happy bomber image which came through from the Goldwater campaign. By contrast we stressed steadiness, staying the course, not enlarging the war, taking on the longer and more difficult task of finding political-military solutions in the South where the war will be won or lost. Already, because of recent decisions on retaliatory bombing, both Goldwater and the Kremlin are now alleging that we have bought the Goldwater position of "going North."

2. In the public mind the Republicans have traditionally been associated with extreme accusations against Democratic administrations, whether for "losing China," or for failing to win the Korean War, or for failing to invade Cuba during the missile crisis. By contrast we have had to live with responsibility. Some things are beyond our power to prevent. Always we have sought the best possible settlements short of World War III, combinations of firmness and restraint, leaving opponents some options for credit and face-saving, as in Cuba. We have never stood for military solutions alone, or for victory through air power. We have always stressed the political, economic and social dimensions.

3. This Administration has a heavy investment in policies which can be jeopardized by an escalation in Vietnam: the President's image and the American image, the development of the Sino-Soviet rift, progress on détente and arms control, summit meetings with Kosygin, reordering relations with our European allies, progress at the United

Nations, stabilizing defense expenditures, drafting reservists.

4. American wars have to be politically understandable by the American public. There has to be a cogent, convincing case if we are to enjoy sustained public support. In World Wars I and II we had this. In Korea we were moving under United Nations auspices to defend South Korea against dramatic, across-the-border, conventional aggression. Yet even with those advantages, we could not sustain American political support for fighting Chinese in Korea in 1952.

> Today in Vietnam we lack the very advantages we had in Korea. The Public is worried and confused. Our rationale for action has shifted away now even from the notion that we are there as advisers on request of a free government, to the simple and politically barren argument of our "national interest." We have not succeeded in making this national interest interesting enough at home or abroad to generate support. The arguments in fact are probably too complicated (or too weak) to be politically useful or effective.

5. If we go north, people will find it increasingly hard to understand why we risk World War III by enlarging a war under terms we found unacceptable 12 years ago in Korea. Politically people think of North Vietnam and North Korea as similar. They recall all the "lessons" of 1950-53: the limitations of air power, the Chinese intervention, the "Never Again Club" against GI's fighting a land war against Asians in Asia, the frank recognition of all these factors in the Eisenhower Administration's compromise of 1953.

> If a war with China was ruled out by the Truman and Eisenhower administrations alike in 1952-53, at a time when we alone had nuclear weapons, people will find it hard to contemplate such a war with China now. No one really believes that the Soviet Union would allow us to destroy Communist China with nuclear weapons.

6. People can't understand why we would run grave risks to support a country which is totally unable to put its own house in order. The chronic instability in Saigon directly undermines American political support for our policy.

7. It is hard to justify dramatic 150 plane U.S. air bombardments across a border as a response to camouflaged, often non-sensational, elusive, small scale terror which has been going on for ten years in what looks largely like a Civil War in the South.

8. Politically in Washington, beneath the surface, the opposition is more Democratic than Republican. This may be even more true at the grassroots across the country.

9. It is always hard to cut losses. But the Johnson Administration is in a stronger position to do so now than any Administration in this century. 1965 is the year of

> minimum political risk for the Johnson Administration. Indeed it is the first year when we can face the Vietnam problem without being preoccupied with the political repercussions from the Republican right. As indicated earlier, our political problems are likely to come from new and different sources (Democratic liberals, independents, labor) if we pursue an enlarged military policy very long.
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> 10. We now risk creating the impression that we are the prisoner of events in Vietnam. This blurs the Administration's leadership role and has spillover effects across the board. It also helps erode confidence and credibility in our policies.
>
> 11. President Johnson is personally identified with, and greatly admired for, political ingenuity. He will be expected to put all his great political sense to work now for international political solutions. People will be counting upon him to use on the world scene his unrivaled talents as a politician. They will be watching to see how he makes this transition from the domestic to the world stage.
>
> The best possible outcome a year from now would be a Vietnam settlement which turns out to be better than was in the cards because LBJ's political talents for the first time came to grips with a fateful world crisis and did so successfully. It goes without saying that the subsequent domestic political benefits of such an outcome, and such a new dimension for the President, would be enormous.
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> 12. If, on the other hand, we find ourselves leading from frustration to escalation and end up short of a war with China but embroiled deeper in fighting in Vietnam over the next few months, political opposition will steadily mount. It will underwrite all the negativism and disillusionment which we already have about foreign involvement generally—with serious and direct effects for all the Democratic internationalist programs to which the Johnson Administration remains committed: AID, United Nations, arms control, and socially humane and constructive policies generally.
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> For all these reasons, the decisions now being made on Vietnam will affect the future of this Administration fundamentally. I intend to support the Administration whatever the President's decisions. But these are my views.

There is no available information on the President's reaction to the Vice President's memorandum, if, indeed, he read it. (He does not mention it in his memoirs.) Coming on the heels of Humphrey's questions about reprisal bombing in the meeting of February 10, however, the memorandum probably confirmed Johnson's decision to exclude Humphrey from any significant participation in Vietnam policymaking while also punishing him in a number of other ways. Only in 1966, when Humphrey decided that he would be more effective if he were back in the President's good graces, and after Johnson decided he needed Humphrey to counter liberal criticism of the war, was the Vice President again invited to participate in meetings on Vietnam.

Among those who shunned Humphrey during 1965 were George Ball and his staff. "Ball's people clearly wanted to keep a safe distance from me," Humphrey said in his memoirs, "and they did. I could not blame them. There was the unmistakable possibility that he would have joined me in limbo, his access to the president limited, his counsel less welcome." [128]

In addition to the doubts being expressed by Vice President Humphrey, and by Ball and Thompson and in the State Department, a few others in the Department were having qualms. These included Hughes, Allen Whiting, Robert Johnson, a member of the Policy Planning Council, Carl F. Salans, the Legal Adviser for the Far East Bureau, and, although he was no longer directly involved in Vietnam affairs, Paul M. Kattenburg, a Vietnam specialist who had been Director of the Vietnam Task Force in 1963.[129]

In the White House, NSC staff member James Thomson was also deeply troubled by the turn of events, and on February 19 he sent a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy, "The Vietnam Crisis—One Dove's Lament," [130] in which he questioned Bundy's February 7 report to the President recommending sustained reprisal:

> I continue to believe that a policy of sustained reprisals against the North entails greater risks than we have any right to take in terms of our world-wide interests. Not so far down the track, given the factors of North Vietnamese and Chinese aircraft, U.S. rules of engagement, Peiping's paranoia, and the Sino-Soviet Treaty, is the strong possibility of a ground war with China—a war in which we do not have the wherewithal to achieve any meaningful "victory" even if our people and our allies allowed us to take on the Chinese armies for a long ground struggle.
>
> The only rational alternative remains negotiation. In this regard the much-abused gentlemen of the *New York Times* and several thoughtful members of the President's own party on the Hill have been doing their duty persistently over the past two weeks and have been speaking truth—oversimplified as it may sometimes sound, and hard as it may be for us to bear. What concerns me most deeply in the course of this period has been the polarization of political and press opinion in the absence of a clear and comprehensive message from the top of the Government. If we have many more speeches like those of [Thomas J.] Dodd [D/Conn.] and Dirksen yesterday, the option of negotiation will become far more difficult—through its repeated equation with appeasement and sell-out (and ultimately, treason.)[131]

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[128] Humphrey, *The Education of a Public Man*, p. 327.

[129] See Paul M. Kattenburg, *The Vietnam Trauma in American Foreign Policy, 1945-75* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1980), pp. 129-130.

[130] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces. On February 10, Thomson had sent a similar memorandum to Cooper. Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, "Some Queries on Our Proposed Reprisal Track."

[131] See below for a discussion of the views of the *New York Times* and Senators Dodd and Dirksen.

> In my view, it is therefore imperative—before the lines of public debate tighten even more severely—that the President be responsive to the initiatives of U Thant [Secretary General of the United Nations] the Pope, and the thoughtful press; and that we be specifically responsive through secret channels by exploring actively the possibilities for a negotiated solution with the British, the Russians, and other intermediaries. (In this regard I should note that we have a Warsaw conversation with the Chinese scheduled for next week.) As far as I can judge, we have failed to do any significant exploration of Hanoi's actual private terms for a settlement. And although several able individuals at State and elsewhere have put their minds to the specifics of a realistic U.S. negotiating position, the Administration has made no concerted effort to staff this out with any of the care and vigor given to target-selection and the like.
>
> It seems to me vital that we not lose our perspective: in South Vietnam we have slipped into a gross overcommitment of national prestige and resources on political, military, and geographic terrain which should long ago have persuaded us to avoid such a commitment. Our national interest now demands that we find ourselves a face-saving avenue of retreat—that we marshal our imaginations and those of other powers—to discover such an avenue.

Although there was some opposition to the decision to begin sustained reprisal and thus to escalate the war, in general, executive branch officials, even some of those who were critical of the decision, seemed to feel that previous choices had led to a narrowing or foreclosing of options. According to Robert Johnson, this was the conclusion of the Policy Planning Group, a small, informal interdepartmental group that had been organized by W. W. Rostow after he became Chairman of the State Department's Policy Planning Council (S/P) in 1961 as a re-creation in part of the more formal national security mechanism which had existed under President Eisenhower and which President Kennedy had discontinued. (At the time—early 1965—those who attended its weekly sessions included Rostow, McGeorge Bundy, McNaughton, Richard Helms (Deputy Director [Plans] of the CIA, and Johnson and various other members of the S/P staff.) Johnson says that at a meeting shortly after the U.S. began to bomb North Vietnam, the group discussed the reasons why the U.S. had escalated the war, and that, "the informal consensus was that, because of the commitments created by our past action, we had little choice." [132]

Should the United Nations Be Used As a "Peace Track"?

During the spring of 1964 there had been discussions between the U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., Adlai E. Stevenson, and Secretary General U Thant on the question of using the U.N. to help end the war.[133] On August 6, 1964, at the time of the Gulf of

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[132] Robert H. Johnson, "Exaggerating America's Stakes in Third World Conflicts," *International Security*, 10 (Winter 1985-1986), pp. 32-68 at 43 n, and CRS Interview with Robert Johnson, June 9, 1988.

[133] For a description of Adlai Stevenson's own position, see John Bartlow Martin, *Adlai Stevenson and the World* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), ch. 5.

Tonkin debate in Congress, U Thant, accompanied by Stevenson, met in Washington with the President, Secretary Rusk and others. Thant suggested to them—and apparently got the impression that they approved—a communication to Ho Chi Minh asking if he would be interested in private talks between the U.S. and North Vietnam. Based on this apparently positive reaction from Washington, Thant wrote to Ho Chi Minh urging negotiations and saying that President Johnson was in favor of beginning peace talks as soon as possible. About three weeks later, according to U Thant, Ho Chi Minh agreed, and on September 23 U Thant reported this to Stevenson who then told Rusk. Based on the reply he received from Rusk, Stevenson informed U Thant on October 15 that the U.S. could not act on the proposal until after the Presidential election.[134]

After the election, Stevenson told U Thant that the U.S. had learned through other sources that the North Vietnamese did not want to confer. U Thant then talked to the Russian Ambassador to the U.N., as well as to Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko, who verified that Ho Chi Minh was agreeable to private talks, and in early January 1965 U Thant asked Stevenson for a response from the U.S. On January 30, Stevenson replied that the U.S. Government could not hold such private meetings with the North Vietnamese because of the problem of keeping them secret, as well as because of the adverse effect on the very weak government in South Vietnam if it became known that the U.S. was meeting privately with the Communists.[135]

On February 11, 1965, Stevenson attended a Cabinet meeting at which he urged the President to pursue a "peace track" along with military action, and to use the U.N. Security Council as the place to begin negotiations.[136] His recommendations, which the President asked him to put in writing, were then merged with the Ball-Thompson proposal and served as the basis for the proposed use of the U.N. contained in President Johnson's February 13 cable to Taylor.

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[134] Walter Johnson, "The U Thant-Stevenson Peace Initiatives in Vietnam, 1964-1965," *Diplomatic History*, 1 (Summer 1977), pp. 285-295, and a somewhat different version in Walter Johnson (ed.), *The Papers of Adlai E. Stevenson*, vol. VIII (Boston: Little Brown, 1979), pp. 661-667.

[135] For further discussion see p. 309 below. In an interview several years later, Rusk, noting that the U.S. thought that U Thant's Russian contact was Vladimir P. Suslov, U.N. Under Secretary for Political and Security Council Affairs, said: "We thought we knew that this fellow was a KGB [the Russian secret police] man, so we were immediately alerted to the fact that this KGB man might be representing his government—the Soviet government—in stating that Hanoi would be willing to meet in Rangoon if we were prepared to do so; or he may be conducting a black operation. He may be trying to deceive us in some way." Rusk added that he had talked to Gromyko during this period, and that Gromyko had not mentioned the matter. "Had this been a Soviet government affair, there's no question that Gromyko would have said something to me about it. . . ." "We were skeptical about the authenticity of this all along." Johnson Library, Dean Rusk Oral History, Interview II (1969).

George Ball's opinion (Johnson Library, George Ball Oral History, Interview I [1971]) is that Rusk "didn't want to encourage a new [negotiating] channel, particularly because he had no particular confidence in U Thant," and had not even mentioned it to him (Ball) "because he didn't regard it as very significant." "He [Rusk] just thought this was Stevenson's anxiety to do something."

On at least two occasions in 1965-1966, U Thant, in meetings with George Ball, described his efforts to arrange for talks and/or a cease-fire. For reports on these, see U.S. Department of State, Lot File 70 D 48, Memorandum of Conversation between Ball and U Thant, Dec. 7, 1965, and New York to Washington USUN 271, Aug. 3, 1966.

[136] Martin, *Adlai Stevenson and the World*, p. 826.

On February 12, U Thant publicly appealed to all sides to refrain from escalating the war, and suggested that the 1954 Geneva Conference could be reconvened to find a solution to the conflict. (On February 11, Pope Paul VI had also called for a negotiated settlement.)[137]

On February 16, U Thant met with Stevenson and proposed a Geneva-type seven-nation meeting (U.S., U.S.S.R., United Kingdom, France, China, North Vietnam, South Vietnam.) This, he said, would be preferable to raising the issue initially in the Security Council where, as Stevenson reported the conversation, U Thant believed that, ". . . Peking and Hanoi would deny the competence of the United Nations [to act on the matter], USSR-US relations would suffer further damage from the debate and that any resolution calling for an end to infiltration and cease-fire would surely be vetoed. He believes events are moving rapidly towards reapproachment between Moscow-Peking, accelerated by the air attacks in Vietnam; and that a proposal calling for negotiations would provide the USSR with a handle to bring Hanoi and Peking around rather than vice versa."

In a letter to President Johnson on February 17, in which he reported this conversation with U Thant,[138] Stevenson urged Johnson not to ". . . pursue a harder military line with all the risks it involves without at the same time making it emphatically clear that we prefer a peaceful solution and that we are ready to negotiate." He said that after his discussion with U Thant and with Rusk, Ball and others in the State Department he would suggest that the President issue a statement which would: "(a) express our firm intention to continue all necessary military measures to stop the aggression; (b) succinctly set forth our peace (war) aims; and (c) indicate our readiness to explore the willingness of the Communists to accept a peaceful solution." After the statement was issued, U Thant would then appeal to the other six nations to hold discussions on Vietnam. Meanwhile, action in the Security Council would be deferred.

This plan, Stevenson told the President, would have several advantages: ". . . [It] would have broad support at home and abroad. It would provide the Soviets with ammunition in Peking and Hanoi. Such a proposal by the Secretary General would be more difficult for the Communists to reject than if made by us. It would move toward internationalizing the problem. It avoids the appearance of the United States suing for peace. It would set us on a diplomatic-military track which can not be attacked as either unlimited expansion of the war or appeasement." "I realize fully," Stevenson added, "that Peking or Hanoi may not bite. If they do, we can begin to talk. If they don't, they would bear the onus. This would help justify politically necessary military action on our part."

Rusk had misgivings about taking the Vietnam issue to the U.N., where he thought the presence of the Russians on the Security Council—the only Communist country on the Council—would make the U.S.S.R. more rigid than it might be in some other forum. At an NSC meeting on February 18, at which he took this position, Rusk, as will be seen, also expressed concern about the handling of negotiations: ". . . there are many who think 'negotiations' is a magic word, but [he] felt it would be a mistake to indicate prematurely our desire to enter into negotiation; unless there was some prospect that negotiations would be meaningful, it would be a very dangerous situation.[139] A negotiation that failed would indicate that we had taken the case to the higher court and it was unable to deal with it. This would be the worst possible situation."

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[137] *New York Times*, Feb. 12 and 13, 1965.

[138] Johnson Library, NSF Agency Files, Representative of the U.S. to the U.N. Stevenson's memorandum of his conversation with U Thant, a copy of which he sent to the President via Presidential Assistant Horace Busby, is in the same location.

The President commented that, ". . . he would rather talk than fight, but nonetheless it was terribly important that the GVN not get the wrong impression that the U.S. is seeking negotiations prematurely. Under these circumstances Saigon might begin its own negotiations very quickly and without our knowledge or participation."

The President agreed with Rusk's position, and it was decided that rather than take the Vietnam problem to the U.N. or have U Thant make the proposal, the U.S. would encourage the British to explore with the Russians their reported interest in convening a Geneva-type conference. After the February 18 meeting, Rusk cabled Taylor to this effect, saying that such an approach would have the advantage of avoiding an oral presentation in the U.N. Security Council "which might require Soviets to act as defense counsel for Hanoi." [140]

On February 24, U Thant held a press conference at which he suggested informal talks to consider the problem of political stability in South Vietnam and the withdrawal of U.S. forces. He said he had submitted a proposal for such talks, which could lead to a formal conference, to the principals, including the U.S. He added that the U.S. Government was not being frank with the American people about the possibility of peace talks. "I am sure," he said, "that the great American people, if only they knew the true facts and the background to the developments in South Vietnam, will agree with me that further bloodshed is unnecessary." "The political and diplomatic method of discussion and negotiations alone," he added, "can create conditions that will enable the United States to withdraw gracefully from that part of the world." "As you know," he concluded, "in times of war and of hostilities, the first casualty is truth." [141]

The response of the White House was that there were no authorized negotiations planned or underway, and that the President "has no meaningful proposals before him." [142]

At about 10 p.m. that night (February 24), Rusk talked by telephone with U Thant about his comment concerning the withholding of truth from the American public.[143] "Compared to the nations involved in the Vietnamese affair," Rusk said, "Americans are certainly much more fully informed." U Thant responded by asking whether Rusk knew of his talks with Stevenson. Rusk said he did, "but didn't see what bearing that had on the question of withholding truth from the American people." Moreover, U Thant's proposals "were just procedural, and did not deal with substantive questions or give any indication that talks would lead to agreement." U Thant said that the North Vietnamese had agreed to talks, but that he had not heard from the United States on the matter for six months. Rusk replied that "bilateral talks are out of the question, particularly since there were no indications they would be fruitful."

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[139] Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings File, Chester Cooper notes of 549th NSC meeting, Feb. 18, 1965.

[140] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 326, Washington to Saigon 1744, Feb. 17, 1965. According to the *Pentagon Papers* (*ibid.*, p. 329), ". . . the Co-Chairmen [British-Russian] gambit was not viewed by anyone involved on the US side as a negotiating initiative. On the contrary, every effort was made to avoid giving such an impression. Instead, the gambit was intended to provide a vehicle for the public expression of a tough U.S. position."

[141] *New York Times*, Feb. 26, 1965, and Walter Johnson, "The U Thant-Stevenson Peace Initiatives in Vietnam, 1964-1965," p. 288.

[142] *New York Times*, Feb. 26, 1965.

Rusk asked U Thant whether he had "any real indications from Hanoi on their willingness to stop the aggression." U Thant replied that he had, "dealt only with procedure," and Rusk said that it was, "dangerous to consider only procedure without knowing whether anything could be accomplished through a procedure."

On February 27, Stevenson's deputy, Ambassador Charles Yost, was directed by the State Department to present a statement of the U.S. position, drafted in Washington, to U Thant, and to inquire what U Thant had meant by his press statement.[144] The next day, Stevenson met again with U Thant. After reviewing the U.S. position on negotiations and the lack of response from the North Vietnamese, Stevenson told U Thant that it had been assumed that their conversations were confidential. The remarks by the Secretary General at his press conference, he said, had therefore caused "consternation" in Washington, and, ". . . had created *very serious doubts as to whether it was any longer possible to have confidential exchanges with Secretariat about international affairs of vital concern to United States.*" [145] (emphasis in original) He added that President Johnson was "particularly distressed" by the public disclosure of this information as well as by U Thant's "reference to 'facts' and 'truth' which had conveyed implication that truth being withheld from American people, though this was presumably not what Secretary General meant to convey."

U Thant said that he regretted having made statements that embarrassed the U.S. He said he had been put in the position of having to talk about his discussions with the U.S. after they had been disclosed by an American newspaper. He said he was certain that information about the Stevenson-U Thant talks had not been obtained from the U.N. Secretariat, implying that it had come directly or indirectly from the U.S. Government.

U Thant said that his "principal preoccupation," and his first and main reason for urging the U.S. to negotiate an end to the war, was "to prevent Moscow and Peking from coming together again." Such a rapproachement, he said, "would be the most dangerous event of 1965 and perhaps of many years to come." Détente between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. "is the most essential element in maintaining peace of the world." His second reason was to seek to prevent a close relationship between the North Vietnamese and the Chinese. His third reason was the attitude of other Asian countries toward the Vietnam war. There was a growing reaction against U.S. intervention, especially the air war against North Vietnam, because of the feeling that a "racial aspect" was involved. Moreover, all countries in the area except for Thailand believed that *"the more the situation in Vietnam is aggravated the more likely it is that Communists will take over."* (emphasis in original)

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[143] There is a copy of a memorandum of this telephone conversation in the U.S. Department of State, Lot File 70 D 48. This and most of the other documents cited here are also in the Johnson Library, NSF Agency File, Representative of the U.S. to the U.N., and in vol. VIII of Stevenson's papers.

[144] For Yost's report on that meeting see U.S. Department of State, Lot File 70 D 48, UNMIS 21, Feb. 25, 1965.

[145] Same location, Summary of Stevenson-U Thant Conversation, Feb. 27, 1965.

Stevenson, in turn, repeated that, "the United Nations position in Washington is at all-time low," but he added that the U.S. wanted to achieve an acceptable negotiated settlement and would be interested in any signs of North Vietnamese interest. Based on his guidance from Washington (the draft of which Stevenson himself had approved), he said that the Communists seemed intent on conquering all of Indochina, and that "United States policy is that Hanoi either slows down or we step up." [146]

In the guidance paper it was also stated: "None of the important political negotiations of modern times would have been successful if there had not already been advance indications that both sides wanted to 'talk turkey' and work out some reasonable accommodation." In a memorandum on March 1, 1965, which was drafted by Yost and signed by Stevenson but was not addressed to anyone, Stevenson challenged this argument and said that "until we demonstrate that we have usable and effective military and political means of restoring an equilibrium in Vietnam, we would be foolish to expect any favorable 'advance indications' concerning negotiations." [147] He questioned whether U.S. airstrikes on North Vietnam between the 17th and 19th parallels, which were then taking place, would produce a willingness to talk, and said that the U.S. would either have to increase its bombing of the North "in a way certain to produce very damaging consequences to our worldwide position" or risk further deterioration of the situation in Vietnam. The alternative would be to enter negotiations without advance indications of a willingness to talk. "The essential point, as history shows, is that negotiations, after the agony of getting them under way is over, are themselves *a stabilizing factor* in the overall politico-military picture, even if they drag on for many months, as was the case in Korea, without a satisfactory conclusion." (emphasis in original)

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[146] For the guidance paper from the Department of State for Stevenson's meeting on February 27, drafted by Harlan Cleveland, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, which had also been approved in draft by Rusk and William Bundy, see, in the same location, Washington to USUN, 2114, Feb. 26, 1965. This paper took the position that calling for a Geneva-type conference was not a "promising approach" at that time. "A conference that breaks up or blows up would make it more difficult to move toward a peaceful settlement thereafter." Moreover, direct U.S. talks with the North Vietnamese ". . . is just not possible from our point of view. . . . If they get into a bilateral talk with us, they naturally have to start with their most extreme bargaining position, which is simply that the U.S. should pack up and go home and leave South Vietnam at their mercy." Moreover, "Direct talks with Hanoi could hardly be held without the knowledge of the Saigon Government. The effect on prosecution of the war of such a contact would be bad in any case; it would be worse if it were unproductive; and worse still if it were done behind the back of the Saigon Government." "The essence of the problem," the paper concluded, "is North Vietnam's interference by men and arms in South Vietnam . . . if Hanoi leaves its neighbors alone, the United States would withdraw its forces promptly."

[147] Johnson Library, NSF Agency File, Representative of the U.S. to the U.N.

The Coup Against Khanh

While considering what steps to take on the "peace track," the President and his associates were keeping a watchful eye on Saigon, where, with discrete U.S. assistance, political change again seemed imminent.[148] Meanwhile, airstrikes on North Vietnam, which had been approved on February 13, were being delayed until there could be some resolution of the situation.

On February 9, Taylor reported to Washington that he had been trying to persuade First Deputy Premier Vien—"one of the most promising of our friends in public life"—to accept the post of Premier which he had been offered by Khanh.[149] In another cable on February 11, Taylor said that he and his associates in the U.S. Mission, ". . . feel that our primary objective should be to encourage the formation of a govt headed by a resolute primin [Prime Minister], civilian or military, who has the full support of the armed forces and the will to maintain order against all comers. Our efforts should be discrete and invisible to the naked eye since no VN official will thrive long who can be accused of being a U.S. puppet." [150]

The Buddhists were continuing to agitate against the war, and on February 12, 1965, some Buddhists led by the Venerable Thich Quang Lien, (Commissioner General for Cultural Affairs in the Buddhist Secular Institute, who had a master's degree from Yale University), issued a manifesto and an appeal for action in the name of "The Struggle Movement for Preservation of Peace and People's Happiness"—about which a great deal more was to be heard in the spring of 1966—which called for an end to violence, a withdrawal of U.S. and Communist forces from the South as well as Chinese and Russian advisers from the North, the abolition of the National Liberation Front, and the establishment of a Reconciliation Committee to work with leaders of the North and the South to reunify the country. "The Vietnamese Problem," the manifesto said, "must be settled by the Vietnamese themselves." "The Vietnamese People do not wish their nation to become . . . [a] Sino-Russian satellite or a colony of the Western-Imperialists." It added, however, that the Vietnamese were grateful for U.S. economic and military assistance, and that if, after order was restored, North Vietnam resumed the war, the South Vietnamese would call on the U.S. for assistance, including "expanding the war into the North to abolish their war-like ambitions." "On the other hand, if the Southern Government secretly or openly intends to destroy the North's security, the Northern Government would also use all her own means to repulse her enemies even calling for the help of the Soviet Union and Communist China." [151]

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[148] For a more detailed discussion of these events see Kahin, *Intervention*, pp. 298-305.

[149] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 2462, Feb. 9, 1965, and Saigon to Washington 2462, Feb. 9, 1965, and NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President, Saigon to Washington 2466, Feb. 9, 1965.

[150] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 2501, Feb. 11, 1965.

Phan Huy Quat, who was acceptable to the Americans (though not their first choice), was named Premier, replacing the Acting Premier, Nguyen Xuan Oanh who had held the post since January 27. Phan Khac Suu, who had been Acting Chief of State since January 27, was confirmed as Chief of State. Gen. Nguyen Van Thieu was made First Deputy Premier and Minister of Defense. Khanh remained in his post as Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and head of the Armed Forces Council.[152]

On February 15, President Johnson met from 6:00 p.m. to 7:15 p.m. with Rusk, McNamara, Ball, McGeorge Bundy, and Llewellyn Thompson to discuss the situation. There apparently are no notes of that meeting. The next day, McGeorge Bundy sent the President a memorandum, "Vietnam Decision," in which he said he had been, ". . . brooding about our discussion of yesterday, and I think I am beginning to understand where the problem is. I think that some of us—perhaps mostly me—have been confusing two questions. One is the firmness of your own decision to order continuing action; the other is the wisdom of a public declaration of that policy by you." [153]

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[151] The text of the manifesto and the appeal are in U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington Airgram A-673, Mar. 4, 1965. The text of a subsequent statement by the group, "Proclamation No. 1," was sent to the Department of State, Saigon to Washington 2896, Mar. 8, 1965, and is in the same location. Subsequently, the Buddhist hierarchy in the Institute, while calling for peace, denied that the Institute was sponsoring Quang Lien's movement. U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Central File, Weekly Report on the Situation in South Vietnam, Mar. 17, 1965, OCI No. 0611/65.

Although they may have been leery of his motives, some U.S. officials may have toyed with using Lien's idea as a foil. In a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy on March 10, in which he suggested possible steps to accomplish U.S. objectives, Chester Cooper proposed that the U.S. should take "some initiative" on negotiations, and, in this connection he said, "I'd *make a big production of Thich Quang Lien's proposal,* made a day or two ago. We could live with this, and it would have the advantage of avoiding a big international conference. While there are some compliance problems, and while Hanoi would almost certainly refuse, I'd put the onus on the North for refusing to acknowledge 'the just aspirations of the Vietnamese people.' " (emphasis in original) In a note he added by hand to the typed memorandum, Cooper said, however, "This [using Lien's proposal in this manner] needs more thought and is getting it." Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam. In a cable to Washington on March 12 (U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 2941, Mar. 12, 1965), Taylor said that "While Quang Lien's program holds risks in terms its vulnerability to misinterpretation and exploitation, if handled carefully it could be used by Buddhist Institute and by GVN to channel in constructive (or least destructive) fashion whatever local peace pressures to [*sic*—probably should be do] develop. Thus, if Quang Lien's program is sincere one and if GVN can keep it in line, in terms US/GVN policy objectives, it could serve as positive source of public support for those objectives."

[152] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington, Feb. 16, 1965 (no number given on the typed copy in the Johnson Library file).

Phan Huy Quat, a doctor of medicine, who was a leader of the Northern Dai Viets, was well-regarded by the Americans. In 1955, he had been selected by the U.S. to replace Diem at a time when it appeared that Diem was going to be overthrown by opposition forces. In 1960, he was one of the 18 signers of the Caravelle Manifesto and was among those from the group who was arrested and jailed by the Diem government. See pt. I of this study, pp. 339-340. For about six months in 1964 he served as Khanh's Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In a personal letter to Unger on Mar. 22, 1965, (Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam), U. Alexis Johnson made this comment: "Quat is not a leader having any great charismatic qualities. I know of none such. . . . However, Quat is a competent 'political animal' able to maneuver and 'adjust' much more competently than either Khanh or Huong. I have confidence in his motives, and while I have less confidence in his judgment, thus far there is no real cause to fault him. Of one thing I am sure, while we should continue to support him, we should not seek to fasten our wagon to his (or any other individual's) star in the way we did Khanh's. While exercising our influence we, as Americans, can for a time maintain artificial levels in the political life here, sooner or later these people are going to find their own level and the longer we resist it the more difficult and violent the change becomes."

[153] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

Bundy explained why it was essential to have a firm and clear decision on sustained reprisal:

> Rightly or wrongly, those of us who favor continuing military action against the North did see it as a major watershed decision. However much it is based on continuing aggression in the South (as it should be), it amounts to a U.S. decision to mount continuing pressure against Hanoi by use of our air and naval superiority. This is not the same, in operational terms, as what we did last August. And it is not the same as a policy of episodic retaliation for particular attacks against large numbers of Americans. It is very different indeed, and the difference is just what we are counting on as the one possible means of turning around a desperate situation which has been heading toward a disastrous U.S. defeat.
>
> Precisely because this program represents a major operational change and because we have waited many months to put it into effect, there is a deep-seated need for assurance that the decision has in fact been taken. When you were out of the room yesterday, Bob McNamara repeatedly stated that he simply has to know what the policy is so that he can make his military plans and give his military orders. This certainty is equally essential if we are to get the necessary political effects in Saigon. If we limit ourselves to the reprisals for spectaculars like Pleiku and Qui Nhon, we leave the initiative in the hands of the Communists, and we can expect no good result.
>
> Thus it seems essential to McNamara—and to me too—that there be an absolutely firm and clear internal decision of the U.S. Government and that this decision be known and understood by enough people to permit its orderly execution.

On the second question—whether the President should make a public declaration of the decision—Bundy said that the President's express desire to avoid "a loud public signal of a major change of policy . . . makes a lot of sense on a lot of grounds." Among other things, as he said Llewellyn Thompson had argued, there was the "virtue of not rubbing the Communist nose in this mess, at least at your level." Moreover, as Lodge believed, "action speaks louder than words in this field." "So in terms of public statement," Bundy said, "I fully understand the forces which were leading you yesterday to suggest that any public comments might best be handled by the Secretary of State and Ambassador Stevenson." Rather than a Presidential speech, which he and Moyers had been urging, Bundy said that, ". . . most of the need for public utterance can be met just as well by the Secretary, and there is a real gain in keeping you out of the immediate military aspect of the matter at this stage."[154]

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[154] On Feb. 16, 1965, James L. Greenfield, Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, sent Rusk a memorandum recommending that either the President or Rusk should make a public statement explaining the reasons for U.S. involvement in Vietnam, U.S. interest in peace, and what the U.S. expected from the Communists in order to achieve peace in Vietnam. Same location.

For Moyers' position, see his memorandum to the President on February 9, in which he recommended a statement by the President discussing ". . . the history of our commitment, the motives behind our commitment, the nature of the Communist aggression, and the relations of our responsibilities to our interests around the world—as well as the protection of freedom elsewhere." Johnson Library, NSF Speech File, Memos to the President, Feb. 9, 1965.

On February 16, the President met from 1:50 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. with Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Ball, William Bundy, and Llewellyn Thompson. The President, who had been waiting for the political situation in Saigon to improve before he ordered the airstrikes on North Vietnam which he had approved on February 13, agreed with a suggestion by McNamara that the strikes could begin in three days. By such action, the President said, the U.S. would "make evident [its determination]—if there *is* any doubt—to Commies and to South Vietnamese and to our own people." [155] Striking North Vietnam, he said, was "much more necessary" because of the "desperate condition" of the South Vietnamese Government. "It may be in adversity you can minimize their differences." "I'm just hoping out of hope," he said, "they'll draw people in Saigon closer together. But bombers won't bring them [North Vietnam] to their knees unless we do something we wouldn't do. [Here, the President was probably referring to punitive bombing of population centers.] We'll be called warmongers . . . peacemakers will be after us. . . . Let's evaluate all their views—all the peacemakers."

He concluded by saying, "I'm not going to announce a new policy. They hit our barracks, our hotel, and we hit theirs." "But Scotty [Reston]," he said, "has a different idea." [156]

After the meeting, McGeorge Bundy sent the President the draft of a cable to Taylor and to Ambassador Bruce in London (for him to give to Prime Minister Harold Wilson) which he said in a cover memorandum was based on the President's comments at the meeting.[157] The purpose of the cable was to provide, as McGeorge Bundy had recommended, a more firm and clear statement of the decision to engage in continuing action. The President, who apparently did not want the cable to indicate that he was fully committed, changed Bundy's wording. Rather than the words, "We have recommended, and the President has concurred in, continuing air and naval action against North Vietnam whenever and wherever necessary," he changed the middle of the sentence to read: ". . . we think the President will concur in. . . ."

Other provisions in the cable were that within 24 hours after the next U.S. military action there would be a statement of U.S. policy, probably by the Secretary of State, as well as an immediate presentation to the U.N. Security Council documenting North Vietnamese aggression.[158] "Careful public statements of USG," the cable said, "combined with fact of continuing air action, are expected to make it clear that military action will continue while aggression continues."

The cable added, however, that ". . . the focus of public attention will be kept as far as possible on aggression, not on military operations." To reinforce this, "There will be no comment of any sort on future actions except that all such actions will be adequate and measured and fitting to aggression."

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[155] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy, handwritten notes of the meeting on Feb. 16, 1965. These are apparently the only notes of that meeting.

[156] This is a reference to James ("Scotty") Reston's articles on Feb. 12 and 14, 1965. See p. 86, fn. 116 above.

[157] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[158] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Washington to London 5147, Feb. 15, 1965.

The next day (February 17), in the conclusion of a speech to a group of business leaders, the President commented on Vietnam, but, consistent with his preference for letting the Secretary of State make the principal public statement, his remarks, while important, were very brief and general:[159]

> I should like to end this visit with you with a word on the very serious situation in Vietnam, which I know must be on the mind of each of you.
>
> As I have said so many, many times, and other Presidents ahead of me have said, our purpose, our objective there is clear. That purpose and that objective is to join in the defense and protection of freedom of a brave people who are under attack that is controlled and that is directed from outside their country.
>
> We have no ambition there for ourselves. We seek no dominion. We seek no conquest. We seek no wider war. But we must all understand that we will persist in the defense of freedom, and our continuing actions will be those which are justified and those which are made necessary by the continuing aggression of others.
>
> These actions will be measured and fitting and adequate. Our stamina and the stamina of the American people is equal to the task.

That same day (February 17), in connection with preparation by the State Department of the public statement which Rusk was to make, William Bundy sent Rusk (who had returned to Washington on February 16) a memorandum in which he said, "The key question remains whether to take a talking initiative [i.e., to propose some form of diplomatic talks on Vietnam] in your press conference statement." [160] After outlining the pros and cons, Bundy said he recommended such an initiative. Later that day, he met with Rusk, who apparently was concerned about a possible rebuff of such an initiative, and who suggested instead a letter to the British and Russians (as co-chairmen of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva Conferences) asking them to explore whether there was a basis for negotiations, and a parallel letter to the U.N. Security Council justifying U.S. policy.

On the following day (February 18), the NSC met from 5:25 p.m. to 6:05 p.m.[161] Present were the President, the Vice President, Rusk, McGeorge Bundy, Ball, Thompson, William Bundy, Unger, McNamara, Vance, McNaughton, General Wheeler, General Carter from the CIA, Chester Cooper, as well as Secretary of the Treasury Dillon and USIA Director Rowan. The President told the group that his statement to the businessmen was an attempt to express U.S. goals. He said he wanted to make it clear "that the U.S. is going to continue its efforts to meet and stop this aggression," and he added, "our mission in Saigon should have no doubts whatsoever as to U.S. intent and objectives."

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[159] *Public Papers of the Presidents,* Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, p. 205.

[160] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers), Memorandum from William Bundy to the Secretary, "South Vietnam Course of Action," Feb. 17, 1965.

[161] Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings File, Chester Cooper notes of 549th NSC Meeting, Feb. 18, 1965.

McNamara and Rusk reported on the increasing tempo of Communist military activity. As was indicated earlier, Rusk also expressed misgivings about taking the Vietnam question to the U.N. Security Council, and about the adverse effect on the South Vietnamese—a point which the President also made—if it should appear that the U.S. was "prematurely" indicating interest in negotiating.

After the meeting, the State Department notified U.S. Embassies in Asia of the President's decision:[162]

> Policy on Vietnam adopted today calls for following:
>
> 1. Joint program with GVN of continuing air and naval action against North Vietnam wherever and whenever necessary. Such actions to be against selected military targets and to be limited and fitting and adequate as response to continuous aggression in South Vietnam directed in Hanoi. Air strikes will be jointly planned and agreed with GVN and carried out on joint basis.
> 2. Intensification by all available means of pacification program within South Vietnam, including every possible step to find and attack VC concentrations and headquarters within SVN by all conventional means available to GVN and US.
> 3. Early detailed presentation to nations of world and to public of documented case against DRV as aggressor. Forum and form this presentation not yet decided, but we do not expect to touch upon readiness for talks or negotiations at this time. We are considering reaffirmation our objectives in some form in near future.
> 4. Careful public statements of USG, combined with fact of continuing air action, are expected to make it clear that military action will continue while aggression continues. But focus of public attention will be kept as far as possible on DRV aggression; not on joint GVN/US military operations. There will be no comment of any sort on future actions except that all such actions will be adequate and measured and fitting to aggression.

A cable was also sent to Taylor, as was mentioned earlier, informing him that rather than using the UN to arrange for talks about a possible settlement of the war, the President had decided to let the British explore the matter with the Russians. (By the middle of March, it was clear that the Russians, despite having suggested the possibility, were not prepared to participate in such discussions.)

The notes of the meeting do not indicate that there was a discussion of specific U.S. policy guidelines, but a memorandum "For the Record" by McGeorge Bundy on February 20 stated that at the meeting the President approved the line of policy contained in the cable to Bruce on February 16.[163]

Even though the President agreed to the formulation of his decision as stated in the cable to Bruce, he continued to be concerned about the way in which the decision might be interpreted, and in his February 20 memorandum McGeorge Bundy took the unusual step of specifying what the President had *not* decided:

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[162] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 324, Washington to Bangkok 1268 (with copies to other posts), Feb. 18, 1965.

[163] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

> 1. The President made no decision with respect to any call for a meeting of the UN Security Council or other discussion in the Security Council.
> 2. The President made no decision with respect to the means or frequency of reports on U.S. military action.
> 3. The President made no decisions within the meeting with respect to the timing of the next military action.

These two documents—the February 18 cable to U.S. Embassies in Asia and McGeorge Bundy's memorandum for the record of February 20—would appear to be the only policy documents in which the President's decision to wage war on North Vietnam was recorded and explained. The decision was not promulgated by way of an NSC memorandum (NSAM).

In Saigon on February 19-20 there was an attempted coup against Khanh by essentially the same group that had attempted the coup in September, 1964, led by Generals Lam Van Phat and Tran Van Don and Col. Pham Ngoc Thao and supported by militant Catholics.[164] With the help of forces commanded by some of

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[164] For a CIA memorandum, "Vietnamese Coup Personalities," Feb. 20, 1965, see Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam. Gen. Lam Van Phat had been an ally of Khanh and was serving in Khanh's Cabinet at the time he participated in plotting the abortive September 1964 coup against Khanh, after which he was forced to retire from the Army.

Tran Van Don, one of the country's most prominent general officers and a leader in the coup against Diem, who, along with the other three "Dalat generals" had been detained after Khanh became Premier in January 1964, had been restored to duty in the fall of 1964 as Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces.

Col. Pham Ngoc Thao, known to be an inveterate plotter, had been a Viet Minh official during French rule after World War II, including the post of chief of Viet Minh espionage in the Saigon area. Under Diem, he had "rallied" to the government, and became an officer in the Army, an adviser on pacification, a very successful province chief, and, in 1962-1963, inspector of the strategic hamlet program. He was selected by U.S. officials as a promising leader, and was brought to the United States for two periods of training in the early 1960s, the second being the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. In 1963, he particpated in the coup against Diem. After Khanh became Premier, Thao became his press officer, but after participating in the coup attempt in September 1964 he was sent to the U.S. as Embassy press officer. He returned in December, went underground, and began organizing against Khanh. (For a Feb. 20, 1965 CIA memorandum on Thao, see Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, OCU No. 0344/65.) After the February 1965 coup attempt he again went underground until May, when he helped to lead an abortive coup against Quat, following which he went underground again. His whereabouts were apparently well-known to authorities, but they hesitated to take action because of his relationship with Catholic elements. In early June, Quat was said to have agreed to allow Thao to leave the country secretly, according to a State Department cable cited by William Colby in a report to McGeorge Bundy on June 4. Colby told Bundy, "There is no certainty that he [Thao] is not also supported covertly by the VC," but he added: "Although there are many allegations to this effect, there is no concrete evidence of it. . . ." Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam. The cable cited by Colby was Saigon to Washington 4003, June 2, 1965. In July 1965, after the Quat government had been replaced by Generals Ky and Thieu, Thao was arrested and killed by the police.

Years after the end of the Vietnam war it was revealed that Thao had been a Communist agent until his death, despite Colby's report as well as the conclusion of the CIA, in the Feb. 20, 1965 memorandum on Thao cited above, that "There is no firm evidence that he has not completely severed his ties with the Communists. . . ." See especially Truong Nhu Tang, *A Vietnam Memoir* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985), ch. 6. In May 1965, however, General Thieu had told General Westmoreland that he thought Thao was a Communist and that the government was planning to arrest him. Johnson Library, Westmoreland Papers, History Backup, Memorandum for the Record, May 31, 1965.

Karnow (*Vietnam: A History,* p. 38) says that he was duped by Thao, and that the CIA, which had used him as a contact, was also. Reporter Robert Shaplen also had been impressed with Thao, and after his death Shaplen wrote: "To my mind, Thao's loss to Vietnam was a tragic one; whatever his motivation to seize power and in spite of his sometimes devious ways, he was a true social revolutionary figure who believed that the only way to save Vietnam from Commu-

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the junior officers, they seized several key installations in Saigon and almost captured Khanh. The coup was abandoned, however, after a meeting between Ky and the leaders of the revolt which the U.S. helped to arrange in return for action by the Armed Forces Council to remove Khanh and send him out of the country. When Khanh resisted, U.S. Army Col. Jasper Wilson, who had been Khanh's personal adviser, helped to convince him to yield, and on February 25 Khanh stepped down and left Vietnam to become Ambassador At Large. Quat remained as Premier, Thieu as First Deputy Premier and Minister of Defense, and Pham Khac Suu as Chief of State. General Tran Van Minh became Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.[165]

On February 23, President Johnson met with Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Ball, William Bundy, and Llewellyn Thompson from 5:30 p.m. to 6:23 p.m. There are apparently no notes of the meeting, but there is the text of a statement presented by Secretary of State Rusk.[166] "It seems desirable and timely for me," Rusk said, "to put down an outline of my own thinking about a comprehensive approach to our effort to assure the security of South Vietnam." "I am convinced that it would be disastrous for the United States and the free world to permit Southeast Asia to be overrun by the Communist North. I am also convinced that everything possible should be done to throw back the Hanoi-Viet Cong aggression without a major war if possible. We cannot accomplish this result without the risk of major escalation; but the other side, too, must face and worry about the same risk."

Rusk stressed the importance of a greater effort by the South Vietnamese, especially in achieving political stability. "The gravity of the present situation in South Vietnam," he said, "as well as the gravity of the decisions with which the United States is faced, calls for maximum effort on the part of the South Vietnamese. The slightest acceptance of a 'business as usual' situation is not consistent with the possibility of an explosion into larger hostilities nor with the experience of other guerrilla actions in Greece, Malaysia and elsewhere."

He emphasized the need for a "stable and unified government":

> The highest possible priority must be given by us and the South Vietnamese to the establishment of a government and leadership which not only is stable but looks stable. Without the elementary platform, other efforts in the military and political field are likely to prove fruitless. Political confusion in Saigon (a) diverts military leaders away from their main job of

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nism was to introduce a form of 'humanitarian Socialism.'" Shaplen, *The Road from War, Vietnam 1965–1970* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 16.

Another key figure in the attempted coup in February 1965 was Gen. Tran Thien Khiem. See p. 47, fn. 11 above.

[165] For a first-hand discussion of these events, see U. Alexis Johnson with Jef Olivarius McAllister *The Right Hand of Power,* pp. 421-425. See also Kahin, *Intervention,* pp. 300-303. Gen. Tran Van Minh was called "Little" Minh by the Americans. "Big" Minh (so-called because of his height) was Gen. Duong Van Minh.

[166] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, unsigned eight-page statement, "Vietnam," Feb. 23, 1965, with transmittal memorandum from Bromley Smith to the President, Feb. 23, 1965, containing this note: "Secretary Rusk was reading from this paper during the meeting with you this afternoon." This same paper appears to have been submitted by Rusk to the President on February 25 as a memorandum. See Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War,* p. 434.

fighting the Viet Cong, (b) undermines the capacity of administration throughout the country to take effective action in pacification and the non-military measures required to organize the countryside, (c) undermines the morale and sense of the American people, (d) frustrates our effort to obtain increasing help from other free world countries to South Vietnam, (e) most important of all, convinces Hanoi and its Communist allies that if they persist in their present course of action, they have every prospect of victory, and, (f) finally, political confusion in Saigon makes it almost impossible to activate political processes which have the prospect of resulting in the security of South Vietnam.

Rusk added: "It is not easy to prescribe from Washington what further steps the United States can take to bring about greater unity and stability in the GVN." "If General Khanh does in fact leave the country," he said, "it would be timely for Ambassador Taylor, Ambassador Johnson and General Westmoreland to interview all of the principal political and military leaders and to obtain from them a pledge to demonstrate both publicly and in their actions that, at long last, they are prepared to put aside personal rivalries and work together for the security of South Vietnam." "Every effort," he said, "should be made to obtain public declarations of support from any and all of the existing non-governmental groups, including Buddhists, Catholics, labor, student, business, or anyone else whose voice can add to a chorus of unified determination."

In addition to taking steps toward political unity and stability, Rusk said that the South Vietnamese should undertake:

(a) additional measures of mobilization,

(b) the organization of the civilian population into a pacification effort, with emphasis upon information and intelligence,

(c) vigorous execution by the South Vietnamese of agreed psychological warfare programs, on which the South Vietnamese have been dilatory and ineffective,

(d) sharply increased international diplomatic and political effort,

(e) intensified military and pacification effort on the basis of a 24-hour day and 7-day week.

"It should be made clear," Rusk said, "that intensified South Vietnamese efforts should not be limited by budgetary considerations or US financial and material support."

With respect to other steps which the U.S. should take, Rusk said, ". . . we should think of the importance of conveying a signal to Hanoi and Peiping that they themselves cannot hope to succeed without a substantial escalation on their part, with all of the risks which they would have to face." For this purpose, he said he favored the immediate deployment to Danang of a U.S. Marine combat battalion, as Westmoreland had requested, which could be promptly increased to a brigade if the situation so warranted. He also favored the use of U.S. naval forces to assist the South Vietnamese in coastal surveillance and interdiction of supplies from North Vietnam.

With respect to bombing the North, Rusk, who seemed dubious about its direct military value, said that, "For the present, strikes into North Vietnam should be considered as serving the political purpose of indicating to the North that they cannot expect to rely upon a sanctuary in the face of their increased infiltration and operations in South Vietnam." [167]

He also commented on the question of negotiations. The U.S., he said, "should be ready to take advantage of any political possibility of bringing the fighting in Southeast Asia to an end consistent with the security of South Vietnam and of Laos," but, "Negotiation as a cover for the abandonment of Southeast Asia to the Communist North cannot be accepted." "A formal and public negotiation at this time," he added, "which would simply register the impossibility of a peaceful settlement would add even greater dangers to the present situation. Our problem is to bring about a combination of circumstances in which negotiations can achieve the abandonment of aggression by Hanoi and Peiping. We have no reliable evidence that Hanoi and Peiping are prepared for any such result."

Finally, noting that "protracted periods of silence on our part can lead to an impression either of indecision or of discouragement and nervousness," Rusk recited what he called the "essentials" of U.S. policy:

> (1) The right of the nations of Southeast Asia to be left alone by their neighbors to work out their own national life and their own international policy without interference by others;
>
> (2) The systematic and large-scale infiltration of trained personnel by North Viet Nam into South Viet Nam contrary to the Geneva Agreements and international law;
>
> (3) The large scale and illegal infiltration of arms by North Viet Nam into South Viet Nam;
>
> (4) The absence of any US desire for a national military presence in Southeast Asia, whether in the form of bases or in the form of the continuing presence of American military personnel;
>
> (5) Our commitment to the settlements of 1954 and 1962;
>
> (6) The absence of any desire on our part to destroy by military means the regimes in North Viet Nam or Mainland China;
>
> (7) Our receptivity to political action which would achieve a result consistent with these essential elements.

ROLLING THUNDER Begins

In Saigon, as was mentioned earlier, sustained reprisal airstrikes on North Vietnam had been postponed until the political situation was more favorable.[168] In the early morning hours of February 25,

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[167] In an interview several years later (Johnson Library, Dean Rusk Oral History, Interview II [1969]), Rusk said that he had not opposed the bombing of the North. He thought that the U.S. ". . . should do whatever was necessary to affect the battlefield in the South," and that the bombing of infiltration routes in North Vietnam and Laos would be valuable for that reason. He said he was skeptical, however, about the "direct effect of bombing on the battlefield itself," after the experience in the Korean war when bombing did not prevent the North Koreans and Chinese from supplying their forces. He also said he was skeptical about bombing in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, which he said did not directly affect the battlefield in the South and was very costly in men and planes.

See also Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War; PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 329, and Warren I. Cohen, *Dean Rusk*, in the series, Robert H. Ferrell (ed.), *The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy*, vol. XIX (Totowa, N.J.: Cooper Square, 1980), p. 243.

[168] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Washington to Saigon 1805, Feb. 23, 1965.

Washington received a "Flash" cable from Taylor: "Khanh airborne. Quat has given political clearances February 26 strike." [169] After Taylor's message was received, orders were given to execute the airstrike.

That afternoon (February 25), Rusk held a press conference, which had been delayed until Khanh had left Vietnam, which he opened with a prepared statement about U.S. policy in Vietnam. Using some of the points he had made in his comments at the White House meeting on February 23, Rusk stressed—as had the cable to Bruce on February 16—the aggression of North Vietnam and the commitment of the United States to resist that aggression. He did not comment on U.S. military operations. The "key to peace in Southeast Asia," he said, was the "readiness of all those in that area to live at peace and leave their neighbors alone. . . ." [170]

Neither in his statement nor in response to questions did Rusk bring up the question of negotiations except to suggest that the "crucial element" blocking negotiations was North Vietnamese aggression. "What is still missing," (referred to as "the missing piece"), he said, "is any indication that Hanoi is prepared to stop doing what it is doing and what it knows it is doing against its neighbors. The absence of this crucial element affects the current discussion of 'negotiations.'" "This question of calling a conference," he added, "under what circumstances—these are procedural matters. What we are interested in, what is needed to restore peace to Southeast Asia, is substance, content, an indication that peace is possible in terms of the appetites and the attitudes of the other side."

Rusk's statement, which he made after it was decided that he and not the President should speak for the administration, was the only major presentation of American policy as the U.S. began to wage war against North Vietnam.[171] Moreover, consistent with the agreement of the President and his associates that no mention should be made "that we had turned a corner and changed our policy," as McGeorge Bundy had said in the meeting on February 10, Rusk did not reveal that the U.S. had decided to move into Phase II (sustained reprisal) or even that such "continuing action" was about to begin.

Rusk's position was supported by Taylor and U. Alexis Johnson, as well as by William Sullivan, U.S. Ambassador to Laos, and

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[169] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 2747, Feb. 25, 1965.

[170] *Department of State Bulletin*, Mar. 15, 1965, pp. 362-371.

[171] On February 27, Horace Busby, a Texas management consultant who had been associated with Lyndon Johnson for many years as an adviser and speech-writer, and was then serving as a special assistant to the President, sent a memorandum to the President recommending that he make a public speech on U.S. policy in Vietnam. Johnson Library, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President. Busby said he was concerned about the "continuing public silence on Vietnam," which he thought would lead to, "A rising acceptance of the pro-isolationist, pro-negotiation, pro-withdrawal position as 'the' intellectual position," as well as a revival of "the elements defeated on November 3" which would "join battle against the negotiate at any price element." "Such a hardening of positions on foreign policy," he said, would severely handicap the country in its effort to deal with the situation in Vietnam. He recommended that the President speak to a joint session of Congress. "The appearance," he said, "would dramatize the forgotten fact that the policies you are pursuing are written in the law of the land by the Congress itself. More important than this are the psychological factors. You would be bearding appeasement defeatists elements in their own den. You would be about to speak—as you have not spoken in a long time—of the solemn task and trials of the times. Far from being demoralizing to the Nation this manner would be reassuring—especially to the considerable element which tends to overstress good times without asking sacrifices of the people."

Graham Martin, then U.S. Ambassador to Thailand and later to Vietnam. In a cable on February 26,[172] Taylor said that at a recent meeting of these U.S. diplomatic representatives in Southeast Asia they had agreed that, "For short term, there appears to be no substitute for our remaining firm and thick-skinned and attempting to keep the issue simple . . . i.e., 'The DRV should leave its neighbors alone, applying policy of peaceful coexistence with its non-Communist neighbors.' " Until the Communists were convinced of U.S. determination, they said, "diplomatic initiatives on our part only serve to confuse the issue and will require longer application of force than would otherwise be necessary." The U.S., they added, should make it clear to North Vietnam that the purpose of U.S. military operations "is to convince DRV to cease its aggression but not to destroy DRV or change its political regime." Moreover, the U.S. should indicate to the Soviet Union "that we would not oppose continuing Soviet role in DRV, to replace dominant influence of Chicoms [Chinese Communists]," without pushing the U.S.S.R. into supporting "North Vietnamese aggression." The advantage of this, Taylor's cable said, would be to provide the North Vietnamese with alternative economic and military support "which would enable it to remain viable if it desires to cease its aggression and thereby loses support it now receives from Chicoms. . . . There would seem little likelihood of a political solution to Southeast Asia until DRV, presumably with Soviet support, has reached position which permits it to detach itself from Chicom instigation and accepts status as small, independent Communist nation north of 17th parallel."

After Khanh left Vietnam, Taylor, Johnson, Westmoreland and others from the U.S. Mission met on February 26 with Quat and other top officials in the regular weekly joint session of the South Vietnamese Internal Security Council and the U.S. Mission Council.[173] Taylor stressed the importance of U.S. airstrikes on the North, ". . . not to destroy people or things there, but to affect the minds of the Hanoi leadership, to convince them that they must stop their aggression and dissuade the VC from continuing their sabotage, or else pay a prohibitively high price." He said he also hoped these airstrikes ". . . would raise GVN morale and depress that of the VC, who would see they no longer had a safe haven. Therefore, these strikes might reverse the trend of the war."

The Quat government, Taylor told the group, "had the possibility of becoming the victory government, of bringing the war to a victorious end." He made three general suggestions: "(1) there was a need to marshal all physical and material resources and to pay special attention to raising and training manpower . . . (2) there was a need to create a spirit of sacrifice and austerity, to demonstrate the war was moving forward to a successful conclusion; (3) there was a need for a feeling of enthusiasm and better GVN communication of its goals and ideals, especially with the nation's youth." The U.S., he added, "stood ready to do everything in its power to help." Quat responded that, ". . . with the support of the Armed Forces, his government could now concentrate on creating the political and military conditions necessary for victory. . . ."

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[172] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 2762, Feb. 26, 1965.

[173] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington Airgram A-659, Mar. 1, 1965.

ROLLING THUNDER, the code name for the 1965–1968 bombing of North Vietnam by the U.S. Air Force and Navy (with limited involvement by the South Vietnamese Air Force), was supposed to begin on February 26, the day after Khanh left the country, but the first strikes were not carried out until March 2.[174]

What was ROLLING THUNDER intended to accomplish? This is a difficult question to answer, partly because of a lack of evidence as to what was intended. There was very little discussion of objectives at the meetings which preceded the decision to begin bombing, and few notes were kept at key meetings, such as the one on February 13, 1965 at which final approval was given to continuing action against North Vietnam. Nor, except for McGeorge Bundy's report of February 7, were there any authoritative public statements, policy papers, or decision papers which explain what ROLLING THUNDER was intended to accomplish.[175] (To some extent, of course, the lack of discussion of objectives and of policy papers was due to the fact that a plan of action had already been approved in December 1964, and the principal question in February 1965 was how it should be executed.)

One reason for the lack of statements or papers was that the President wanted to protect his domestic legislative program, as well as to maintain public support for his Vietnam policy in the U.S., South Vietnam, and other countries, and this led him to restrict disclosure of new U.S. military moves as well as to portray them as being a continuation and implementation of existing policy rather than as a change of policy. (In addition, because of the differences in the executive branch with respect to the objectives and scale of bombing, the President may have deliberately avoided taking a position that might have exacerbated those differences.)

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[174] The official Air Force and Navy histories of *ROLLING THUNDER* have not yet been completed. The Air Force history, *The Air War Over North Vietnam,* which is being written by Dr. Wayne L. Thompson, historian in the Office of Air Force History, will appear as a volume in the series *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia.* At present the only Air Force publication on the subject is Carl Berger (ed.), *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961–1973* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1977). The Navy history, *The Air War in North Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia* will appear as a volume in the series, *The United States Navy and the Vietnam Conflict.*

Meanwhile, there has been some reexamination of ROLLING THUNDER within the Air Force. See Col. Dennis M. Drew, Director of the Airpower Research Institute, *ROLLING THUNDER 1965: Anatomy of a Failure,* Airpower Research Institute Report No. AU-ARI-CP-86-3 (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air Univ. Press, 1986).

For other critiques of ROLLING THUNDER see Guenther Lewy, *America in Vietnam* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1978), ch. 11; Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith, *How Much is Enough?* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 303-305; Thomas C. Thayer, *War Without Fronts: The American Experience in Vietnam* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985), ch. 8; James Clay Thompson, *ROLLING THUNDER: Understanding Policy and Program Failure* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1980). Other useful works are John Morrocco, *Thunder from Above,* a volume in the series, *The Vietnam Experience* (Boston: Boston Pub., 1984), and the study prepared by antiwar activists at Cornell University, sponsored by the Peace Studies Program of the Center for International Studies and the Program on Science, Technology and Society, Raphael Littauer and Norman Uphoff (eds.), *The Air War in Indochina,* rev. ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972).

For an excellent account of the air war based on the experience of Navy carrier pilots, see Zalin Grant, *Over the Beach* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1986).

[175] As William Bundy later observed, "While the course that the President followed [in February] could be taken to have a marked resemblance of the 'Option B' that had been prepared by our working group in November and December, I do not believe there is any paper that really summarizes what the policy and strategy were by the middle of March, the hopes and estimates that lay behind them, or just what was expected to happen." U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers), William Bundy notes, January 1969, on the major decisions in February and July 1965.

One way to restrict the disclosure of information was not to have policy papers and to hold smaller meetings at which there was very little discussion of objectives and no official notes of the discussion; another was to refrain from making public statements.

Perhaps the most effective way of exercising control over the situation was to make a minimal decision which resulted in limited action and appeared to leave open the question of further decisions and further action. This was the course pursued by President Johnson, and, as a result, even some of his closest associates appeared to be puzzled about what he had decided.

Another advantage of limiting disclosure and of portraying new military moves as the continuation and implementation of existing policy was that there might be less public notice taken of the apparent discrepancy between these moves and the President's peace theme during his recent political campaign, thus helping to protect his political support.

Another very important reason for avoiding public statements and for portraying new military moves as being a continuation and implementation of existing policy was the effect on North Vietnam, as well as on the U.S.S.R. and China. There was, as Llewellyn Thompson argued, and as McGeorge Bundy said in his memorandum to the President on February 16, a "virtue in not rubbing the Communist nose in this mess." [176] Moreover, as Taylor had said when queried about a possible Presidential statement announcing the new moves, "We think there is much to commend in views of Thais and Souvanna [Phouma, Premier of Laos], that we should act and then not talk about our actions. More public the challenge we present to DRV more difficult it becomes for them and their friends to back down or remain inactive." [177]

Various arguments were made for bombing the North,[178] but it is not clear how much weight was given to each of these, either by

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[176] Prior to the initiation of ROLLING THUNDER, in an effort to assure the Chinese that they were not threatened, the U.S. sent word to China on February 25 that although it would take continued action to defend itself and South Vietnam, it did not have aggressive intentions toward North Vietnam itself. (*PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 277.) A similar message was communicated to the U.S.S.R.

[177] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 2186, Jan. 18, 1965.

[178] In addition to the studies of ROLLING THUNDER cited above, see Wallace J. Thies, *When Governments Collide* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980), Robert L. Gallucci, *Neither Peace Nor Honor: The Politics of American Military Policy in Vietnam* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 47-55; Col. William E. Simon, "The Vietnam Intervention, 1964-65," in Alexander L. George, David K. Hall and William E. Simon, *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971), pp. 144-210.

According to McGeorge Bundy's memorandum to the President on Feb. 7, 1965, the "primary target" of sustained reprisal against the North was to improve the situation in the South rather than to "win" an air war against the North or to influence the "will of Hanoi to direct and support the VC." The latter, he said, was an "important but longer-range purpose." In addition, he argued, ". . . a reprisal policy—to the extent that it demonstrates U.S. willingness to employ this new norm in counter-insurgency—will set a higher price for the future upon all adventures of guerrilla warfare, and it should therefore somewhat increase our ability to deter such adventures."

Taylor and his civilian associates in Saigon argued that the primary goal of action against the North was to influence North Vietnamese leaders. As was mentioned earlier, Taylor stated in a cable to Washington on February 12 that the objectives of graduated reprisal should be, in order of importance: "(a) the will of Hanoi leaders; (b) GVN morale; and (c) physical damage to installations having some bearing on the DRV ability to support VC." Of these, he said, the first ". . . appears to us by far the most important, since our effectiveness in influencing Hanoi lead-

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the President or by his principal advisers. The rationale for bombing also changed over time (within a month after ROLLING THUNDER began, interdiction of infiltration, rather then influencing the will of the North Vietnamese was becoming the primary emphasis), and this resulted in latter-day interpretations that may not have accurately reflected original intent.

Of the various reasons given for ROLLING THUNDER, the following, which are not listed in order of importance, were the most salient:

(1) To improve morale in the South and to strengthen U.S. South Vietnamese relationships.[179]

(2) To influence the will of the North Vietnamese, causing them to reduce or cease supporting the insurgents in the South and to agree to a political settlement.

(3) To reduce the capability of the North to send personnel and supplies to the Communists in the South.

(4) To improve the bargaining position of the U.S. and South Vietnamese in future negotiations with the North.

(5) To demonstrate to the Vietnamese and other Communists, and to the world, the determination of the U.S. to honor its commitments.

(6) To deter future Communist insurgencies supported by external sources by demonstrating U.S. willingness and capability to retaliate effectively against North Vietnam.[180]

There were other, less public intentions and objectives. Bombing of the North was assumed to be more palatable to Congress and the American public than a ground war, and therefore was considered to be more politically acceptable. The corollary of this was

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ership will, in the long run, determine the success or failure of our efforts in both North and South Vietnam." Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Saigon to Washington 2530, Feb. 12, 1965.

The military, especially the Air Force and Navy, argued that the principal purpose of bombing was to destroy the will and capability of the North Vietnamese to continue supporting the insurgency in the South.

[179] In an interview several years later, George Ball said that the reason for bombing the North ". . . didn't have anything to do with any very clear decision that something had to be done to the North, but that something had to be done for the South. There had been a whole sordid series of coups, a feeling that the whole political fabric of South Vietnam was beginning to disintegrate, and that we had to do something very fair [*fast?*] and affirmative if we were going to keep this damned thing from falling apart. That's what happened. It was a great bucker-upper for South Vietnam. . . . That was really the reason for it." Johnson Library, George Ball Oral History, Interview I (1971).

[180] In the draft on Mar. 24, 1965 of a "Proposed Course of Action Re Vietnam," (Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam) McNaughton summarized the purposes of action against the North:

"(1) To reduce DRV/VC activities by affecting DRV will.

"(2) To improve the GVN/VC relative 'balance of morale.'

"(3) To provide the US/GVN with a bargaining counter.

"(4) To reduce DRV infiltration of men and matériel.

"(5) To show the world the lengths to which US will go for a friend."

In a memorandum (prepared by McNaughton's office) to the President on July 30, 1965, (same location) McNamara said that the primary purposes of the program of bombing North Vietnam were:

"a. *To promote a settlement.* The program was designed (1) to influence the DRV to negotiate (explicitly or otherwise), and (2) to provide us with a bargaining counter within negotiations.

"b. *To interdict infiltration.* The program was calculated to reduce the flow of men and supplies from the North to the South—at the least, to put a ceiling on the size of war that the enemy could wage in the South."

"Supplemental purposes of the program," the memorandum stated, were "(c) to demonstrate to South Vietnam, North Vietnam and the world the U.S. commitment to see this thing through, (d) to raise morale in South Vietnam by punishing North Vietnam, the source of the suffering in the South, and (e) to reduce criticism of the Administration from advocates of a bombing program."

that U.S. bombing of the North could have the effect of paving the way for greater U.S. military involvement in the air and on the ground.

In making the decision to begin ROLLING THUNDER President Johnson intended that retaliation against the North would accomplish one or more of these objectives, but because of the lack of evidence it is not clear whether or how he may have ranked their relative importance.[181] Whatever his intentions and reasons may have been, the President seems to have shared the belief of many of his advisers, as well as leading foreign policy and military strategists, that the U.S., with its superior military power, could, by the graduated use of that power, cause the North Vietnamese to modify their behavior.[182] This position was stated several years later by Cyrus Vance, who was Deputy Secretary of Defense at the time the decision was made to begin sustained reprisal:[183]

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[181] In a meeting with his advisers on January 6 (p. 33 above), the President stated that he had never thought that reprisals would stabilize the South Vietnamese Government, but in a cable to Taylor on February 8 (p. 67 above), drafted by McGeorge Bundy, the President said, "I am impressed by the argument that the building of a minimum government will benefit by some private assurances from us . . . that we do now intend to take continuing action," and in a meeting with his advisers on June 10, 1965, he declared that, "*His* reason for going North was to save morale in the South." (emphasis in original) Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy, handwritten notes of meeting of June 10, 1965. However, during the various meetings before ROLLING THUNDER began, the President also referred to the need to deter the North Vietnamese and to persuade them to cease supporting the Communists in the South, as well as to convince the Chinese and Russians that the U.S. would stand fast in South Vietnam. See above discussion of the February meetings, and Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, p. 129.

The lack of Presidentially-approved policy papers or authoritative comments on the intended accomplishments of retaliating against the North, coupled with the difficulties which the President's advisers were having in ascertaining what he did or did not believe or had or had not decided, resulted in something of a hiatus in the policymaking system during February when, as William Bundy later remarked, rather than ". . . a clear program of slowly increasing bombing unfolding thereafter [after Pleiku] with an agreed strategy guideline . . . it seemed much more like a series of *ad hoc* decisions the total form of which was not necessarily clear even to the President himself." William Bundy notes of January 1969, cited above.

[182] During 1964, as was indicated in ch. 1 (above), U.S. policymakers had developed plans for the use of graduated or measured pressure against North Vietnam, and in December 1964 the President gave his approval to a plan based on this concept. One of the principal proponents of this approach, W. W. Rostow, described it in August 1964 as follows (*PP*, Gravel ed., vol. V, p. 336):

"By applying limited, graduated military actions reinforced by political and economic pressures on a nation providing external support for insurgency, we should be able to cause that nation to decide to reduce greatly or eliminate altogether support for the insurgency. The objective of these pressures is not necessarily to attack his ability to provide support, although economic and certain military actions would in fact do just that. Rather, the objective is to affect his calculation of interests. Therefore, the threat that is implicit in initial U.S. actions would be more important than the military effect of the actions themselves."

According to one analyst, this approach—the "diplomacy of violence" or "coercive diplomacy"—consists of: "(1) stating clear and simple demands regarding the opponent's compliance behavior; (2) applying limited force and avoiding incidents or clashes of arms that would provoke the opponent into an impulsive military response; (3) conveying a threat of punitive measures to follow in the event of the opponents failure to comply; (4) applying additional pressure on the opponent through international diplomatic activity; (5) maintaining a graduated scale of options so as to preserve freedom of action for the United States; and (6) being prepared to provide a public quid pro quo in return for the opponent's compliance." Simon, "The Vietnam Intervention," pp. 148-149. See also John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982), Chapter 8: "Implementing Flexible Response: Vietnam as a Test Case"; Thies, *When Governments Collide*, pp. 5-11; Alexander George et al., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, cited above; Gordon A. Craig and Alexander L. George, *Diplomatic Problems of Our Times* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982); Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1966). For critiques of the use of graduated pressure or "gradualism" in the Vietnam war, see especially George et al., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, ch. 5; Thies, ch. 5; Gaddis, pp. 249-273; Stephen Peter Rosen, "Vietnam and the American Theory of Limited War," *International Security*, 7 (Fall 1982), pp. 83-113; Col. Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: The Vietnam War in Context* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 1981, reprinted ed., Navanto, Calif.: Presidio Press, 1982).

[183] Johnson Library, Cyrus Vance Oral History, 1970.

> . . . I think that a lot of us felt that by the gradual application of force the North Vietnamese and the NLF would be forced to seek a political settlement of the problem. We had seen the gradual application of force applied in the Cuban missile crisis, and had seen a very successful result. We believed that if this same gradual and restrained application of force were applied in South Viet Nam, that one could expect the same kind of result; that rational people on the other side would respond to increasing military pressure and would therefore try and seek a political solution. We did not sufficiently understand the North Vietnamese, nor what would motivate them; and I think that this is one of the great problems that faced us and the whole conduct of the war in Viet Nam.[184]

Chester Cooper has given a similar interpretation:[185]

> . . . I think it's fair to say that the mood in Washington once the bombing started was almost one of . . . it wasn't euphoria by any means, but it was certainly characterized by high optimism. . . . And this mood of optimism, this sense that the war would soon be over, was not one merely for public consumption. . . . They [U.S. leaders] weren't necessarily trying to fool the American public. They, themselves, perhaps were fooled. . . . In the very early period it was just inconceivable that a small, third-class military power could really hang in against this kind of a bombing attack.

Based on this expectation that the war would end, some thought was being given to the terms on which bombing would cease and negotiation could begin. In a cable to Washington on February 11, Taylor discussed the "tentative thinking" of the U.S. Mission on what those terms might be. The North Vietnamese, he said, should, ". . . return to strict observance of 1954 Accords with respect SVN and the 1962 Agreement with respect to Laos—that is, stop infiltration and bring about a cessation of VC armed insurgency." [186] The U.S., in turn, would comply with the 1954 Accords—i.e. remove all of its forces except for several hundred advisers—and the South Vietnamese would enter into trade talks with the North which could lead toward normal economic relationships. The U.S. and South Vietnam would also give assurances that they would not use force or support the use of force by any other party against North Vietnam. The South Vietnamese would also permit Communist forces in the South to remove themselves, without weapons, to the North, and would give amnesty to those who wanted to lay down their weapons and remain in the South.

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[184] Interestingly enough, the Buddhist leader, Thich Tri Quang, who was critical of the increasing U.S. involvement in the war in South Vietnam, was also a critic of U.S. bombing of the North, not because he disapproved of it, but because he thought it was ineffective. In a conversation with U.S. Mission officials in late March 1965, he said that the raids had not been sufficiently frequent or severe to have a significant effect, and he recommended that they be intensified. U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 3039, Mar. 22, 1965.

[185] CRS Interview with Chester Cooper, Apr. 10, 1979. See also the comments of Bill Moyers, p. 454 below.

[186] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 2495, Feb. 11, 1965.

There was also some concern, however, that, rather than ending, the war would escalate as a result of U.S. attacks on North Vietnam. On February 11, 1965, Robert Johnson of the State Department Policy Planning Council sent a memorandum to William Bundy, "War Termination in Vietnam," in which he said that if this occurred, the point at which negotiations could take place would be passed and the U.S. would be confronted with fighting a major war. To prevent this, and to find a way to terminate the war, he recommended that the U.S. should state clearly and publicly its willingness to negotiate and the terms under which it would cease attacking the North. At the same time, he said, U.S. ground forces (initially only the Marines) should be deployed to South Vietnam (and possibly also to Thailand) to improve morale in the South and to strengthen the U.S. bargaining position.[187]

In an interview some years later, Robert Johnson explained why, in view of the fact that he was opposed to fighting a major war, he had recommended the deployment of ground forces.[188] He said he viewed it as a way of getting the U.S. out of an "unwinnable war" by using a strategy similar to that of President Kennedy in the case of Laos, who, as a way of precipitating negotiations, had threatened to use ground forces.

Johnson believed that ground forces would provide more "potential leverage" for purposes of negotiation than would the bombing of North Vietnam. In order to begin negotiations, bombing would have to be stopped, and, given the political pressures facing the U.S., would be difficult to resume. With ground forces, on the other hand, "Once they're in there they had to be negotiated out. They would continue to be there during negotiations." For similar reasons, he said, the presence of ground forces would be more indicative of the seriousness of U.S. purpose.

Moreover, ground forces would be better leverage because they would be more of a potential threat to the North Vietnamese, who would be less vulnerable to or threatened by bombing than by the possibility of having to refight the kind of war fought earlier against the French.

Another reason was that bombing was not going to be effective and the issue of ground forces was inevitably going to arise. Robert Johnson's purpose, therefore, was to tie the question of using ground forces to the question of gaining leverage for negotiations. "Since we were headed that way [use of ground forces] anyway, I think what I was trying to do here was to take advantage of that eventuality and try to turn it in a direction that would get us into a political settlement, rather than just into a ground war in Southeast Asia."

Johnson added that, related to this, there was an internal, bureaucratic reason for proposing the use of ground forces, namely, finding a way to overcome opposition to negotiations: "What I was trying to do here, I think, was to set up a situation in which it would be possible to move openly to negotiation because negotiation, you have to understand, is a very bad word, up until the time, certainly, of escalation. We didn't talk about negotiation. When anybody else talked about it we tried to knock it down. . . . the question, then, is how we enter into negotiations in a way that will not be a sign of weakness . . . and it was for that reason that I suggested the introduction of ground forces."

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[187] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers).

[188] CRS Interview with Robert Johnson, June 9 and 15, 1988.

Johnson did not believe, however, that negotiations could prevent the Communists from eventually controlling all of South Vietnam. Rather, he thought that by negotiation the U.S. could provide a "'decent interval' as it was called later, some kind of a cover under which the processes that were going on in Vietnam, which we could no longer control, would work their way out . . . a negotiated way out which would have some ambiguity. It wouldn't be certainly a Communist takeover but it would very likely lead to a Communist takeover." He added that to have said explicitly that this would be the outcome, ". . . would have been to have said, oh, that's being totally unrealistic; that's not something we can do, we can't bug out, as the phrase was. So you tended instead to hide behind negotiations as a word and to get the process going. . . ."

By the end of March 1965, Robert Johnson's primary concern was the specter of a large ground war. In a memorandum on March 31 to William Bundy, "Policy Choices in Vietnam against the Background of Prior Planning," [189] in which he argued that, as his study group had predicted in its report on March 1, 1964,[190] U.S. pressures on North Vietnam "have not so far produced the desired reactions," including an improved bargaining position for the United States,[191] Johnson urged that before sending large-scale ground forces the U.S. should ". . . take time to consider where we are headed and whether the costs and prospects for success of a major ground war make it a preferable alternative to a clearcut US initiative for a negotiated settlement." He added that, "Such a settlement would necessarily, of course, involve acceptance of a political role for the Front [National Liberation Front], but . . . our pressures are not going to get us anything better in negotiations in any event."

Johnson says that some of his colleagues considered his views to be "alarmist," and that, in response to this criticism, he changed the title of the memorandum, which originally was to have been called, "The Coming Ground War in Asia." [192]

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[189] Kennedy Library, Thomson Papers.

[190] See p. 6 above.

[191] In the Mar. 31, 1965 memorandum Johnson noted that in one respect the forecast of the Mar. 1, 1964 report had been negated by actions of the U.S. In the March 1 report it had been predicted that military action against Vietnam "would create very great pressures for an international conference." However, the March 31 memorandum continued, "These estimates of political pressures were based upon the assumption that the US military pressures would be mounted relatively suddenly, with little warning, and that they would rise rapidly. Instead, both what we *said*, leaked to the press, etc., and what we *did* got the world used to the idea that the war might escalate. In particular, the fact that the initial escalation [the airstrike after Pleiku] was a limited 'one-shot' retaliatory affair which did not produce immediate counter-action took the edge off the sense of alarm."

Johnson also noted that, "The absence of pressures for a conference have deprived us and the Communists of a ready face-saving way out of the action. To maximize the sense of that we have discouraged talk of a conference. Our general political posture and our mounting military actions against North Vietnam have, in our democratic society, increasingly committed us to a hard posture of insistence upon evidence of Communist compliance with our demands as a precondition to negotiations. Many hostages have now been given to this position in our public justification of our actions and in the way our opinion-molders in American society have been influenced."

[192] CRS Interview with Robert Johnson, June 9, 1988.

The Marines Are Sent to Danang

In addition to ROLLING THUNDER, the President was being urged to approve the deployment of U.S. combat forces to protect U.S. installations, especially HAWK anti-aircraft missiles that had been sent to Danang in early February 1965. On February 11, 1965, as was mentioned earlier, the JCS recommended the deployment of a Marine brigade (approximately 5,000) to Danang. On February 22, General Westmoreland requested that two Marine battalion landing teams (a battalion landing team is a battalion with support forces; there are three or four battalions in a brigade) be deployed to Danang, with a third held in reserve on ships off shore.[193] Ambassador Taylor did not agree, and in a cable to Washington on February 22, he said:[194]

> As I analyze the pros and cons of placing any considerable number of Marines in Danang area beyond those presently assigned, I develop grave reservations as to wisdom and necessity of so doing. Such action would be step in reversing long standing policy of avoiding commitment of ground combat forces in SVN. Once this policy is breached, it will be very difficult to hold line. If Danang needs better protection, so do Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhut, Nha Trang and other key base areas. Once it becomes evident that we are willing assume such new responsibilities, one may be sure that GVN will seek to unload other ground force tasks upon us. Increased numbers of ground forces in SVN will increase points of friction with local population and create conflicts with RVNAF over command relationships. These disadvantages can be accepted only if there is clear and unchallenged need which can be satisfied only by US ground forces.

Taylor reviewed several roles that Marines could perform, one of which would be to conduct mobile operations against the Communists. This, he said, ". . . would raise many serious problems which in past have appeared sufficiently formidable to lead to rejection of use of US ground forces in a counterguerrilla role."

> White-faced soldier armed, equipped and trained as he is not suitable guerrilla fighter for Asia forests and jungles. French tried to adapt their forces to this mission and failed. I doubt that US forces could do much better. Furthermore, we would have vastly complicating factor of not running war and hence problem of arranging satisfactory command relationships with our Vietnamese allies. Finally, there would be ever present question of how foreign soldier could distinguish between a VC and friendly Vietnamese farmer. When I view this array of difficulties, I am convinced that we should adhere to our past policy of keeping our ground forces out of direct counterinsurgency role.

In deference to Westmoreland, and in recognition of the growing pressure for sending a Marine detachment to Danang, Taylor concluded by saying that he would agree to recommend the deployment of one Marine battalion landing team to Danang for base security purposes.[195] Westmoreland agreed to the change, provided that additional troops would be sent subsequently.[196]

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[193] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, MACV to CINCPAC 220743Z Feb. 1965, MAC JOO 5515.

[194] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 2699, Feb. 22, 1965.

CINCPAC disagreed with Taylor and supported Westmoreland's original request for two battalion landing teams, as did the JCS.[197] Admiral Sharp (CINCPAC) also took issue with Taylor's comment that U.S. forces were not suitable for a counterguerrilla role in Vietnam: "This," Sharp said, "stands athwart past performance in this function. The Marines have a distinguished record in counterguerrilla warfare." [198]

On February 26, while, as will be seen, the Senate was engaged in a "debate" on U.S. policy in Vietnam, President Johnson met from 7:05 p.m. to 9:50 p.m. with Rusk, McNamara, Ball and McGeorge Bundy and approved Westmoreland's request for the deployment of two Marine battalion landing teams to Danang. According to William Bundy, ". . . with no work by any staff outside the Pentagon, the matter was presented to the President . . . and approved by him." [199]

According to a cable the next day from Wheeler to CINCPAC and Westmoreland reporting on the President's decision,[200] "It was also made clear [in the meeting with the President] that U.S. policy is as follows:

"A. Do everything possible to maximize our military efforts to reverse present unfavorable situation.

"B. Increase substantially our military efforts in South Vietnam. Increase tempo and effectiveness of our strikes against DRV being careful to avoid pushing them to the extent of forcing Chicom intervention.

"C. In view of lack of interest exhibited by Hanoi and Peking in negotiations at this time and the weakness of the GVN/US position at the council table, refrain from early negotiations. In this connection it was recognized that the preliminaries to any realistic negotiations would require at least three to six months to produce results, making it even more necessary for us to take positive action to reverse the unfavorable situation in South Vietnam by all means available."

On March 7, on the CBS-TV program "Face the Nation," Rusk was asked whether the Marines would "be available for combat duty." He replied: "The purposes of those Marines is to provide local close-in security for the Marines who are already at Danang with the Hawk missiles and other American personnel there in connection with aircraft. It is not their mission to engage in the pacification operations." Again he was asked, "Do you exclude the possibility of their getting into action against the Viet Cong," and he replied: "Oh, I think there is no doubt that if they are shot at, they will shoot back. But their mission is the security of the Danang base." [201]

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[195] On March 2, Taylor cabled the State Department that while he had "accepted the justification" for sending the Marines to Danang, "I am concerned that we not rush in and take over the conduct of the war from the Vietnamese. I think that it would be a political and psychological mistake to change our past positions that this is a Vietnamese war in which we are helping in areas where the Vietnamese cannot help themselves." U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 2817, Mar. 2, 1965.

[196] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 404, MACV to CINCPAC 231230Z, February 1965.

[197] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, CINCPAC to the JCS, 240315Z, Feb. 24, 1965. The JCS concurred, Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, JCSM-130-65, Feb. 24, 1965, cited in *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 419-420.

[198] CMH, CINCPAC to the JCS, 240315Z, March 1965.

[199] Bundy MS., ch. 22 B, p. 31. There are apparently no notes on the meeting.

[200] CMH, Wheeler to Sharp and Westmoreland, JCS 0736-65, 272152Z, February 1965.

A State Department cable on February 26 informed Taylor that the two battalion landing teams of Marines were on their way and that he should secure the approval of the Government of South Vietnam.[202]

On March 8-9, the two battalion landing teams, a total of 3,500 Marines, landed at Danang, and the Defense Department announced that "after consultation" with the Government of South Vietnam, the U.S. "has agreed to the request of the Government of Vietnam" to station the Marines at Danang for base security purposes.[203]

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[201] *Department of State Bulletin,* Mar. 29, 1965.

[202] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Washington to Saigon 1840, Feb. 26, 1965.

[203] *PP,* Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 423. In his memoir (*In the Jaws of History,* pp. 130-132), Bui Diem, then Quat's chief of staff, discusses the question of U.S. consultation with the South Vietnamese Government when decisions were being made in early 1965 to employ American forces in Vietnam. The decision to bomb the North after Pleiku, he says, ". . . was carried out on a unilateral basis [by the U.S.], without even a modicum of joint American-Vietnamese governmental consideration." The decision to use U.S. airpower in South Vietnam itself, which was also made in Feb. 1965, was, Bui Diem says, ". . . made without any special notice being taken. It now seems all but incredible that such a step, with its momentous political implications and devastating impact on the population, was made without any official discussion between the Vietnamese and American governments."

The decision to deploy the Marines at Danang was particularly serious, Bui Diem says. "For the South Vietnamese it meant the presence once again of foreign soldiers on our own territory." He and Quat felt that ". . . bringing foreigners into the fighting would be a heavy handicap indeed. . . . Accepting American troops could be justified only in extremis, if the nation was otherwise faced with extinction."

This is Bui Diem's description of the "consultation" that took place on deploying the Marines (there had been an earlier meeting between Taylor and Quat, pursuant to the State Department's instructions to which Bui Diem refers, in which Bui Diem apparently had not participated):

"Early on the morning of March 8 I received a phone call from Dr. Quat, asking me in a strained voice to come to his house immediately, something urgent had come up. When I arrived, I found Melvin Manfull [Counselor for Political Affairs of the U.S. Embassy] already there. The American diplomat looked all business, but Quat was obviously nervous. Without asking me to sit down, Quat said that marines were at that moment coming ashore at Danang to take up defensive positions around the base. Manfull and I were to write a joint communiqué announcing the landing. 'Be as brief as possible,' Quat told me. 'Just describe the fact and affirm our concurrence.'

"The news itself was not an overwhelming surprise, because in the back of my mind I knew that Westmoreland would soon be pushing for something like this. But the abruptness of the thing and the lack of preparation for it were upsetting, to say the least. Taking Quat by the arm, I guided him into the next room. As soon as we were away from Manfull, I said, 'Is there something going on on the military front we don't know about? Something that's making them do this so suddenly?'

"Quat did his best to project an air of calm, but his voice was tense. 'Listen,' he told me, 'they are landing on the beaches right now. They are already ashore. Please, just draft the communiqué and we can talk about the situation later.'

"Within half an hour, Manfull and I had prepared a text announcing the arrival of two battalions of U.S. marines, 'with the concurrence of the Vietnamese government.' But as soon as the American diplomat left, I got back to the point with Quat. He told me that several days earlier he and Ambassador Taylor had had an 'exchange of ideas' about the need to reinforce South Vietnam's defenses. As part of this exchange, which Quat had considered no more than an initial, general discussion, Taylor had broached the subject of bringing in the marines. Quat had then told Taylor he was reluctant to see an 'Americanization' of the war. Although he had not requested American troops, Quat told me, neither had he explicitly opposed the idea. For his part, Taylor, as Quat put it, 'had shared many of my views on the matter.'

"When I asked Dr. Quat why we faced this sudden development, he answered, 'I think Taylor himself was taken by surprise by a quick decision from Washington. This morning he tried to present it to me as a strictly limited military move that had to be taken because conditions were bad around the base.'

"The same misleading impression of joint consultation given in the communiqué was conveyed more vividly the following day in Saigon's newspapers, where front-page pictures showed battle-ready marines being greeted on Danang's beaches by lovely Vietnamese girls dressed in native ao dai dresses and carrying leis. It seemed like a well-prepared official welcome. Few who saw the pictures knew the facts behind the open arms and smiling faces."

In an interview some years later, Maxwell Taylor said that the decision to send the Marines represented the "nose of the camel." "You couldn't take that nose out once you landed those Marines up at Danang. You had lost a tremendous asset: a floating, flexible possibility of having force just over the horizon [on ships off shore]. Once you got them to Danang, that was lost. Furthermore, once you got that far then there was the obvious danger of needing troops elsewhere. I knew Westmoreland had a lot of things he could use American troops for if the climate changed and he could get the thing started." [204]

According to Gen. William E. DePuy, Westmoreland's J-3 (Operations), neither the deployment of the Marines at Danang nor the subsequent deployment of the 173rd Airborne Brigade to protect the airbase at Bien Hoa was the "product of a Westmoreland concept for fighting the war." [205] Rather, they resulted from the actions taken to respond to the Gulf of Tonkin attacks in August 1964 and the attacks on U.S. bases during February 1965. Moreover, these first deployments were "more at the initiative of Washington and Honolulu [CINCPAC] than the initiative of MACV." Westmoreland and the MACV staff, DePuy says, were still thinking in terms of using U.S. forces to assist the South Vietnamese in fighting a rapidly escalating counterinsurgency war.

There was no public reaction from Congress, which apparently had not been consulted on the decision to deploy the Marines. There had been a number of congressional briefings on the situation, however, as well as speculation in the media that U.S. forces might be used, and for those Members of Congress most closely involved with Vietnam policymaking the decision probably came as no surprise.[206]

The only evidence of private congressional reaction was a memorandum from Mansfield to the President on March 18, 1965 which stated in part:[207]

> It was noted in previous memorandums that if the United States air attacks were continued it would be necessary either to safeguard American forces already in Viet Nam by the addition of American combat forces on the ground or, alternatively, to draw into Saigon the Americans scattered elsewhere in Viet Nam. It was further noted that the Viet Cong reaction to the bombings would not be to pit their weakness against our strength (that is, send MIGS against Hawk Missiles) but their

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[204] CRS Interview with Maxwell Taylor, Jan. 11, 1979.

According to the *Pentagon Papers*, (Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 433), "The landing of the Marines at Da Nang was a water-shed event in the history of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. It represented a major decision made without much fanfare—and without much planning. Whereas the decision to begin bombing North Vietnam was the product of a year's discussion, debate, and a lot of paper, and whereas the consideration of pacification policies reached talmudic proportions over the years, this decision created less than a ripple."

[205] CRS Interview with William DePuy, Aug. 1, 1988.

[206] There was some discussion of the deployment of the Marines at a closed Senate hearing on March 8 on the Defense Department Appropriations Bill for FY 1966, but the published transcript contains numerous deletions of classified material. (The complete transcript is still closed.) See U.S. Congress, Senate, *Department of Defense Appropriations, 1966,* Hearings before the Subcommittee on Department of Defense of the Committee on Appropriations and the Committee on Armed Services on H.R. 9221, 94th Cong., 2d sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1965).

[207] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President. See also Mansfield's memorandum on March 24, discussed below.

strength against our weakness (their land forces against "isolated pockets of Americans").

It is obvious, with the dispatch of Marines to Da Nang, that it has now been decided to guard American installations other than Saigon with our own troops. Within the context of that decision, I would most respectfully suggest the following:

1. That the number of installations to be defended with American combat ground forces be strictly limited to a minimum consistent with the requirements of United States policy, insofar as it may involve continued air and naval operations against the Communists.
2. That such American-guarded installations, preferably, be on the coast or otherwise readily accessible from the sea.
3. That Americans scattered elsewhere in Viet Nam be drawn into those American-defended installations.

The above recommendations are based on the following reasoning:

In installations on the coast or near Saigon, our strength (American air and sea power) can be brought to bear, effectively, both in terms of supply, and actual defense capability. Such installations can be held, therefore, with the expenditure of relatively fewer lives than installations in the interior. In the interior, the Viet Cong, just as the Viet Minh once did against the French forts, can mass forces against one installation at a time. To hold them, we will be drawn into deploying progressively larger numbers of United States ground troops throughout the country.

Under present conditions Hanoi really has no effective way of retaliating against the air-attacks. But if we have large numbers of our troops in Viet Nam, the Communists would have meaningful United States targets against which to launch their principal strength, Hanoi could strike back at us by sending main forces into the South.

Even if [Vo Nguyen] Giap [Defense Minister of North Vietnam] did not strike south, the deployment of United States guards throughout the country would actually strengthen the hand of the Viet Cong. It allows them to apply military pressure directly at a choice of United States targets at times and places of their own choosing. To sum up, whatever future direction policy may assume, the fewer the potential American targets in Viet Nam the better, unless, of course, we mean to take over the entire conflict in South Viet Nam.

CHAPTER 3

RAPID EXPANSION OF THE U.S. ROLE

In mid-February 1965, President Johnson and his associates began to campaign vigorously for congressional and public support for the expanding U.S. role in Vietnam. As a part of this campaign, and in order to justify increased military involvement, especially bombing of the North, the administration wanted to make the case that the North Vietnamese were infiltrating men and supplies into the South in violation of the 1954 Geneva Accords, thus enabling the U.S. (although not a party to the Accords) to argue that it was within its rights to enter the war. Beginning in December 1964, Chester Cooper, a former CIA staff member who was then on the National Security Council staff, was assigned responsibility for gathering information on infiltration, and during late January and early February 1965 this was made available to Congress and the press.[1] On February 26, 1965, the State Department published a "white paper" on "Aggression from the North" [2] which, according to Cooper, "proved to be a dismal disappointment." [3] One of the problems, he explained in an interview some years later, "was that the only hard information we had about North Vietnamese participation and supplies and so forth came from information that was much too highly classified to include, and the only information that was of sufficiently low classification was pretty thin gruel." [4]

George Ball said later that the white paper was "terrible." "I was a trained lawyer. I thought this was a most unpersuasive brief." [5]

Most of the congressional criticism of the administration's increasing military involvement in Vietnam was coming from the

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[1] For a discussion of the Cooper project see *PP,* Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 255-257. The Foreign Relations Committee received the information on infiltration in a letter from Rusk on Feb. 8, 1965 which is in the committee's files in the National Archives, RG 46. For the transcript of a background briefing on infiltration for the press on Jan. 26, 1965, by Chester Cooper and William Bundy, see Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[2] U.S. Department of State, "Aggression from the North: The Record of North Vietnam's Campaign to Conquer South Viet-Nam," Pub. No. 7839 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1965).

[3] Chester L. Cooper, *The Lost Crusade* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1970), p. 264. Journalist I. F. Stone, for example, pointed out that a very small percentage of the average of 7,500 weapons captured in the South in 18 months had come from North Vietnam: "The material of North Vietnamese origin included only those twenty-four French sub-machine guns 'modified' in North Vietnam, two machine guns made in North Vietnam, sixteen helmets, a uniform and an undisclosed number of mess kits, belts, sweaters and socks. Judging by this tally, the main retaliatory blow should be at North Vietnam's clothing factories." Stone also disclosed that although the report claimed that 75 percent of the 4,400 Communists who infiltrated the South in the first half of 1964 were from the north, a careful study of the data in the report revealed that there was a total of only six North Vietnamese infiltrators. Stone, "A Reply to the White Paper," reprinted pp. 212-218 in Stone's *In a Time of Torment* (New York: Random House, 1967).

According to Chester Cooper, Stone's critique of the white paper "pretty much destroyed its usefulness in intellectual circles." Cooper, *The Lost Crusade,* p. 266.

[4] CRS Interview with Chester Cooper, Oct. 9, 1986.

[5] Johnson Library, George Ball Oral History, 1st Interview (1971).

President's own party in Congress. Senate Majority Leader Mansfield's opposition was particularly galling to Johnson, who, while serving as Senate majority leader, had been responsible for Mansfield's selection as majority whip. Although Mansfield generally refrained from voicing publicly the strong opinions on Vietnam which he was expressing privately to the President, Johnson knew that Mansfield was respected in the Senate and the House and that his demonstrated lack of support for the President's Vietnam program could affect congressional support for that program, especially among Senate Democrats.

The situation in the House was not as serious. The Democratic leadership of the House and of the relevant House committees, as well as most Republican leaders and ranking Republican committee members, was solidly in favor of the administration's Vietnam program. This, together with the House rules governing hearings and debate, which are much more restrictive and subject to leadership control than those in the Senate, gave the administration and its allies in the House the controls needed to limit if not prevent serious disaffection and dissent.

Once he decided that Phase II of the plan for graduated military pressure should commence, President Johnson and his associates began to develop congressional support for that program. Having already included key Democratic and Republican leaders from the Senate and House in the NSC discussions prior to the final decision to proceed with sustained reprisal, as well as holding a larger leadership meeting on February 10, Johnson began working on persuading individual Members as well as Congress as a whole. During February and the first part of March, he held ten meetings at the White House to which the entire Congress was invited in groups for briefings on Vietnam by top officials.[6]

Johnson dominated these briefings. According to Senator Frank Church's report of one of the meetings, the President was so excited that he "looked like a light bulb about to go out," and "proceeded to answer questions, sometimes allowing Mr. Rusk a few minutes, sometimes Mr. McNamara, but usually jumping up and sitting them down and answering the questions himself. He . . . really acted almost like a carnival barker, using all of his persuasive powers . . . and calling upon many a folksy tale to fortify his argument." [7]

Johnson also used these occasions for what Church—alluding to Johnson's penchant for hovering close to the person to whom he was talking—called "nostril to nostril" conversations. At the meeting on February 18, following a speech by Church that day in which he urged a negotiated settlement in Vietnam, Johnson came over to Church during a social gathering following the briefing. According to Church, "he came through the crowd like a dreadnought parting the destroyers right and left, and backed me into the corner of the dining room." There, for an hour, Church said, he tried "to show me my error." At one point Church said he agreed with Walter Lippmann, a *Washington Post* columnist, and the President responded to the effect that "Walter hasn't been all bad on this." [8]

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[6] Most of these meetings were tape-recorded, and the transcripts of those portions dealing with Vietnam are now available at the Johnson Library, Transcripts of Vietnam Briefings. Major themes were the importance of the U.S. commitment, North Vietnamese aggression, and the threat of China in Southeast Asia. There were also appeals for U.S. unity and references by the President to Congress' authorization by the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. A brief period was allowed for questions, but, partly because of the size of the meetings, there was very little exchange of views. Nor was there any discussion by the President and his associates of the differences of opinion which had been expressed in White House meetings, especially by Ball and Humphrey, both of whom supported the President in these congressional meetings.

[7] Johnson Library, Frank Church Oral History, (1969).

At that same session, Senator Eugene J. McCarthy (D/Minn.) later related, Secretary of State Rusk described the Khanh government as being stable and secure. The next morning (February 19) it was overthrown. This incident, McCarthy said, greatly increased his own doubts about the accuracy of administration reporting on conditions in Vietnam.[9]

After the meeting the President invented his own version of the encounter which he related the next day to a reporter, and which was then widely publicized. According to that version, Church said, "I agree with Walter Lippmann," and the President replied, "The next time you want a dam in Idaho, Frank, go see Walter." [10]

Faced with growing opposition from the Democrats, especially in the Senate, the President and his associates began courting more actively the Republicans in Congress, particularly Senate Minority Leader Dirksen, a tactic subsequently employed regularly as criticism of the war increased. As one journalist reported: "In 1966 and 1967, as Mansfield's opposition hardened, Mansfield would be seated for White House state dinners at a table in one of the far corners of the dining room, and Dirksen would be seated at the President's table. Fulbright would not be invited to attend." [11]

In the House, the administration used the tactic of encouraging Members of the House not to follow the example of the Senate. Another tactic, used frequently as the war became more unpopular, was to use House rules and procedures to prevent potentially damaging hearings or votes from taking place. Thus, in February 1965, a request from about 25 liberal Democratic representatives for a hearing on the war by the Foreign Affairs Committee was turned down, leading one of those involved, Benjamin S. Rosenthal (D/N.Y.), to assert subsequently that the "executive branch imposed its desires on the Congress not to hold that kind of hearing," and that this was one example of the ways in which ". . . Congress was repeatedly frustrated by the executive branch. In everything we wanted to do . . . the executive branch took every overt step to make sure we did not do anything to upset the applecart." [12]

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[8] *Ibid.*, and CRS Interview with Frank Church, July 5, 1983.

[9] Eugene McCarthy, *The Year of the People* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), p. 17.

[10] CRS Interview with Frank Church, July 5, 1983.

[11] Neil MacNeil, *Dirksen: Portrait of a Public Man* (New York: World, 1970), p. 175. According to MacNeil, a veteran *Time* magazine reporter on Capitol Hill, (p. 274):

"During the Vietnam War Dirksen became President Johnson's most important supporter on his management of that war. He stood staunchly with Johnson on Vietnam from the very beginning and never flagged in that support, even when Democrats and Republicans alike fled from Johnson's Vietnam policies. The rising opposition to the war only seemed to drive Johnson and Dirksen closer together on their views of the war. They spent long hours alone consulting at the White House. There were reports, only halfheartedly denied by Dirksen, that not only did he help the President select bombing targets for American airplanes in North Vietnam but that on occasion he alone picked some of the targets. . . . Dirksen could be faulted, as he was, and by his own party members, for yielding so totally to President Johnson on so momentous a question as the Vietnam War. Acting as he did, he made himself a partner in responsibility for the military commitments that Johnson made."

Another technique was to encourage resolutions of support by political party leaders and groups on Capitol Hill, such as the statement by the joint Senate-House Republican leadership on February 17, 1965 which said in part:[13]

> We, the members of the joint Senate-House Republican leadership, want to make it clear we support President Johnson's recent order for strikes against Communist supply bases in North Vietnam. If we have any difference with the President in this respect, it is the belief these measures might have been used more frequently since the Bay of Tonkin decision last August and an even stronger policy formulated in the meantime. . . . We suggest that so long as there is Communist-promoted infiltration of South Vietnam in violation of the 1954 and 1962 Geneva agreements, there can be no negotiations on the Vietnamese question. . . .

On March 3, a similar appeal was issued to all Democrats in the House of Representatives by the House Democratic Steering Committee, an arm of the House Democratic leadership, which had adopted a resolution of support for the President's Vietnam program, and urged other Democratic representatives to join the leadership in supporting the President.[14]

The administration and its supporters in Congress also organized speechmaking and discussions in the Senate and House, with articulate advocates such as Senator Gale W. McGee (D/Wyo.), a former history professor, and (as of March 1965) a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, as their spokesmen.[15]

Besides working closely with Republicans and friendly Democrats in Congress, the President wanted and got the endorsement of his Vietnam policy by former Presidents Harry S Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Truman's came by letter.[16] Eisenhower was invited to the White House on February 17, and in a well-publicized meeting with Johnson he expressed his support for the President's actions.[17]

According to the notes of the Johnson-Eisenhower meeting, Eisenhower said he "viewed our purpose as that of denying Southeast Asia to the Communists." [18] This could not be accomplished, however, ". . . by a 'Roman wall,' composed of outside forces such as our own. It is necessary to stop the infiltration, and the Vietnamese themselves must be the basis of that effort. We can, however, play a major part in destroying the will of the enemy to continue the war." This, Eisenhower said, was the value of airstrikes against the north, which "cannot deny the ability of the DRV to infiltrate" but could "discourage the north and can make them pay a cost for continuing their aggression." McNamara, who was present, agreed: "We should try to induce them to get out of the war without having their country destroyed and to realize that if they do not get out, their country will be destroyed."

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[12] U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Congress, the President, and the War Powers,* Hearings before the Subcommittee on National Security Policy and Scientific Developments, 91st Cong., 2d sess. (Washington, D.C.: Govt. Print. Off., 1970), p. 21.

[13] *CR,* vol. 111, p. 2811.

[14] *Ibid.,* p. 4033.

[15] See McGee's comments in his 1969 oral history for the Johnson Library.

[16] See the *New York Times,* Feb. 17, 1965.

[17] As Burke and Greenstein point out in their study, *The Quality of Presidential Decision Making,* cited above, Eisenhower supported Johnson's actions, as he had Kennedy's, because to do otherwise would be a disservice to the incumbent President and to the country. Moreover, he apparently assumed that Johnson had set his course, and was seeking advice only on how it could best be carried out. Privately, however, Eisenhower was known to be very concerned about the expansion of U.S. military involvement, feeling as he did that it would be very difficult for U.S. forces to be used successfully, and doubting whether, if they were used, there would be the determination to apply the resources necessary to prevail.

[18] Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File, "Memorandum of Meeting with the President, 17 February 1965."

The President said he was concerned that Vietnam might be another Korea, and Eisenhower replied: ". . . the U.S. has put its prestige onto the proposition of keeping Southeast Asia free. Indonesia is now failing. We cannot let the Indo-Chinese peninsula go. He hoped it would not be necessary to use the six to eight divisions mentioned,[19] but if it should be necessary, so be it."

Johnson asked Eisenhower about negotiations. Eisenhower replied that, "Negotiation from weakness is likely to lead only into deceit and vulnerability, which could be disastrous to us." It was particularly important, he said, to make sure that the Chinese understood U.S. determination to defend Vietnam and Southeast Asia. He referred to his messages during the Korean war, after becoming President, in which he told the Chinese "to take care lest dire results occur to them," and he advised Johnson to tell the Chinese privately and quietly "what we are seeking to do in South Viet-Nam, and that we would act against them if necessary."

Eisenhower also suggested that Johnson make his peace with French President Charles de Gaulle, and he appears to have suggested to Johnson that he should use de Gaulle as a way of communicating with the Chinese and the North Vietnamese.

Johnson asked Eisenhower whether the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution ". . . was strong enough and ample to fill the need." Eisenhower replied that it was like the Formosa Resolution, "which had left a large area of discretion and flexibility to the President, and that he thought that this was the way it should be."

Eisenhower also volunteered his opinion that the U.S. Government should keep the public fully informed about Vietnam policy. The notes of the meeting do not indicate whether Johnson commented on this suggestion.

The Vietnam Debate in the Senate

On February 17, 1965, while the President and his associates were making final plans to begin Phase II, a "Vietnam Debate" began in the Senate. The idea for the debate originated at a party at Walter Lippmann's several days earlier during a conversation about Vietnam involving Lippmann and Senators Church, McGovern and Gale McGee, in which McGee disagreed with the views of Church and McGovern and it was decided that the discussion should continue in the Senate. As McGee later recalled, "We did so in a week or ten days; we made it a matter of rather long, protracted discussions on the floor of the Senate and this, I think, became the first conscious launching of what . . . we had come to call the Vietnam debate." [20]

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[19] Apparently President Johnson had mentioned this possibility, probably in an earlier portion of the memorandum that was excised when the document was made public.

In the opening speech of the Vietnam Debate on February 17, Senator Church commented on the "overinvolvement" of the United States in the ex-colonial regions of the world, Asia and Africa, which resulted, he said, from "our intensely ideological view of the cold war. We have come to treat 'communism,' regardless of what form it may take in any given country, as the enemy. We fancy ourselves as guardian of the 'free' world, though most of it is not free, and never has been." Yet a foreign policy of intervention in the ex-colonial areas, he added, could exceed U.S. capabilities and lead to adverse and self-defeating reactions.

With respect to Vietnam itself, Church continued, the argument of the executive branch was that the U.S. had to prevent the loss of Southeast Asia, "But the hard fact is that there are limits to what we can do in helping any Government surmount a Communist uprising. If the people themselves will not support the Government in power, we cannot save it. . . . The Saigon Government is losing its war . . . for lack of internal cohesion."

Church concluded that neither side could win a "decisive victory" in the guerrilla war being waged, and that the U.S. should seek a negotiated settlement by which the entire Indochina region would become neutral.[21] He refrained, however, from criticizing the President, who, he said, was "earnestly attempting to avoid a widening war in Asia."

McGee then spoke. ". . . the domino theory is valid at the present moment," he said, and a larger U.S. commitment in Asia might be required:

> It may take more troops. I do not know. . . . It may take more money. Who knows?
>
> I am only saying that in the context of the history of the cold war, we have proved that when the chips are down in the critical crisis points around the globe, we are willing to risk everything in order to stand tall. And this has been the policy that Moscow understood. It is a policy that even the Chinese might understand. We have invested too much—we have risked too much until now to fritter it away with indecision at this moment, for fully as much rests on the right decision in Vietnam as rested on the right decision in Greece, Berlin, Germany, or Korea. . . .
>
> The answer to why we must now stand tall in Vietnam is most clearly seen in the perspective of the cold war itself. . . . History thrust upon the people of America the frightening, but nonetheless indispensable, task of redrawing the lines of stability about the power spheres of the globe.

It was essential, McGee said, for the U.S. to continue to "seal off the forces of world imperialism," and, by "drawing a firm line and holding it in east Asia," to prevent the Chinese from gaining supremacy in that area of the world. He recognized the difficulties of doing so, especially the inherent disadvantages of defeating the insurgents in a guerrilla-type war, but he stressed the importance of preventing the Chinese from jeopardizing the "political balance in the world." ". . . the condition of the Vietnamese people," he added, "and the direction in which their future may be going, are at this stage secondary, not primary." McGee said it was important to avoid misinterpretation of U.S. intentions by the Communists, and he proposed a series of steps to convince the Communists that the U.S. would not retreat, but that it did not have any territorial ambitions in Vietnam and would negotiate a reasonable settlement. The U.S. should draw a "firm line" along the 17th parallel westward and announce that no breaking of or infiltration across that line would be tolerated. If there were violations, the U.S. should respond by graduated bombing of North Vietnam.

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[20] Johnson Library, Gale McGee Oral History (1969).

[21] Church's speech is in *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 2869 ff.

McGee concluded: "The 1930s taught us that we cannot appease the mighty or the ambitious, but the 1950s and the 1960s have taught us that they can be contained and even stopped short of a big war. It is the calculated risk we have to take now." [22]

On February 18, Senate Republican Leader Dirksen replied to Church and McGovern, saying, among other things, "Another round of negotiating like 1954 and 1962 and we shall find ourselves negotiated right out of Asia and right into a really big war." "If we do not man the ramparts of freedom on our outer defense line from Korea to South Vietnam," he added, "we shall inevitably be facing the enemy on the inner line from Alaska to Hawaii."

Senator Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts, ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee, agreed with Dirksen, saying that the U.S., "must go to any conference table from a position of strength rather than weakness." "Our boys are being killed," he added. "Our boys are being wounded. We cannot take that lying down. We must retaliate."

Among others, Senator Smathers, the deputy Democratic whip, who was very close to Johnson, also commended Dirksen, and said that any indication that the U.S. might withdraw from Vietnam "would accomplish nothing except to encourage Communists in other areas of the world to step up their pressure against us, if they thought they might force us to withdraw."

Majority Leader Mansfield praised all of those who were participating in the debate for their "patriotic unity" as well as the service they were performing in debating the issue. "The Senate," he said, "has the experience, the knowledge, and the courage to look ahead—to consider paths which lie beyond the point of any immediate decisions in foreign relations. . . . The Senate has the duty to ask itself, even as the people of the Nation ask themselves, 'Where do we go from here?'"

Concluding the day's debate on February 18, Lausche defended the President's position, Morse attacked it, and Church and McGovern answered Dirksen's criticism.[23]

The Vietnam Debate continued in the Senate on February 23. Meanwhile, on February 21, former Senator Goldwater had called for increased bombing of North Vietnam, and on February 23,

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[22] McGee's speech is in *ibid.*, pp. 2884 ff. McGee subsequently published a book, *The Responsibilities of World Power* (Washington, D.C.: National Press, 1968), dealing with his position on Vietnam and the role of the U.S. in Asia.

[23] For the February 18 debate see *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 2146 ff.

Robert F. Kennedy, who had been elected to the Senate as a Democrat from New York in 1964, declared that the U.S. should keep its commitments in Vietnam.[24]

Senator Thomas Dodd, a strong champion of Johnson and an ardent supporter of the administration's foreign policy, opened the February 23 debate with a long and vivid speech on "Vietnam and the New Isolationism" in which he said, ". . . the basic fact of our world is that Western civilization, itself terribly rent and divided, both politically and philosophically, has been forced into a twilight war of survival by a relentless and remorseless enemy." The "new isolationism," with its ". . . basic premise . . . that the United States is overextended in its attempt to resist Communist aggression around the world, overcommitted to the defense of distant outposts, and overinvolved in the murky and unintelligible affairs of remote areas," was "appeasement." If the U.S. was not strong enough to honor its commitments, it should become stronger. Moreover, this could be done while meeting domestic needs. The U.S. could wage both an internal "war on poverty" and an external "struggle against tyranny."

Dodd emphasized the importance of the U.S. role in Vietnam, and said: "The demand that we negotiate now over Vietnam is akin to asking [Prime Minister Winston] Churchill to negotiate with the Germans at the time of Dunkirk, or asking Truman to negotiate with the Communists when we stood with our backs to the sea in the Pusan perimeter in Korea." Moreover, the consequences of an American defeat in Vietnam "would be so catastrophic that we simply cannot permit ourselves to think about it."

If the U.S. were to "negotiate the surrender of Vietnam," Dodd said, and then were to try to defend the rest of Southeast Asia, this would end up being more costly than defending Vietnam itself. If the U.S. withdrew from all of Southeast Asia, this would "result in the early disintegration of all our alliances, and in the total eclipse of America as a great nation." Thus, he concluded, "Whether we decide to abandon Southeast Asia or to draw another line outside Vietnam, the loss of Vietnam will result in a dozen more Vietnams in different parts of the world."

Dodd denied that the Vietnam war was a civil war, which he said was "one of the most widespread misconceptions about Vietnam," as well as disputing the contention that the position of the U.S. could be analogized to that of the French in the First Indochina War.

He also believed that the war could be won "without an invasion of the North and without a significant intensification of our military effort." "Nor do I believe," he added, "there will be any large-scale involvement of American troops on the Korean model."

In discussing "What Can Be Done?" Dodd, who was one of Lansdale's advocates, said that one of the major weaknesses in the U.S. program was the lack of good "political warfare." On the military side, he recommended increased guerrilla warfare by the U.S. and the South Vietnamese against the Communists in the south and the north. He added, after suggesting several specific military actions that should be undertaken:

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[24] *New York Times*, Feb. 22 and 24, 1965.

> It has become obvious that we cannot go on fighting this undeclared war under the rules laid down by our enemies. We have to make a great decision, a decision as to whether we are to take the hard steps necessary to turn the tide in Vietnam or whether we are to refrain from doing so and thus lose inevitably by default.
>
> The ultimate outcome of the cold war depends upon an affirmative decision to do whatever is necessary to achieve victory in South Vietnam. The events of recent weeks demonstrate again that the administration is not lacking in resolve and that it is rapidly approaching such a decision.
>
> Whether that means a larger commitment of forces, or continued retaliatory strikes against the North, or carrying guerrilla warfare to the enemy homeland, or completely sealing off South Vietnam from Communist aid—I say to the administration, "Give us the plan that will do the job, and we will support you."

Following Dodd's speech, Allen J. Ellender (D/La.) who had been opposed to getting more involved in Vietnam, said he was concerned that without a stable government in South Vietnam and greater help from American allies the U.S. was getting into another Korean-type war. Liberal Democratic Senator Paul H. Douglas (Ill.), however, said he agreed with Dodd. "To those who say that there is no analogy between the cumulative conquests of Hitler and Mussolini in the late 1930s and the cumulative developments of the Chinese in Asia in the 1960s," Douglas said, "I should say that there is grave danger that they delude themselves. It would be a terrible thing if we woke up to find all of Asia Communist."

Conservative Senators Lausche, Karl E. Mundt (R/N.D.), John G. Tower (R/Tex.), and A. S. Mike Monroney, a moderate Democrat from Oklahoma, also praised Dodd's speech. Tower said, "It must be made clear to the American people that we must take stringent action in southeast Asia if we are to deter and discourage further aggressive adventures by the Communists."

Monroney said, "an attempt to arrange a negotiated settlement at this time would be folly in the extreme."

Senator Jacob K. Javits (R/N.Y.) questioned Dodd about his stand on negotiations, pointing out that, as the President had said, the U.S. was willing to negotiate, but not if it meant a "sellout." Dodd replied that he did not know what there was to negotiate, except to say to the Communists that they had broken the Geneva Agreement, which he said was a "breach of covenant." [25]

On February 24, 1965, the debate continued in the Senate.[26] McGee repeated his proposal for making the U.S. position clear to the Communists. Ernest Gruening took issue with him on the responsibility of the U.S. in Vietnam, saying that the U.S. could not win the war "by military means." "Therefore," Gruening added, "I am one who feels that a great tragedy is confronting the American people, the loss of hundreds and in the future, if we persist, of thousands and tens of thousands of young American lives, in a war which ultimately will be settled in the form in which the North Korean conflict was settled—a stalemate."

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[25] Senate debate on February 23 is in *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 3346 ff.

[26] See *ibid.*, pp. 3497 ff.

McGee replied, "The waging of peace involves a willingness to risk war. In the rebalancing of the power vacuums of the world that has always been the case." He warned again of the threat of Chinese power in southeast Asia, and said, "In the context of Asia and the Asian peoples, allowing for the lack of sophistication and the lack of stability in their governments, and for a lack of experience in democracy, the power factors remain the same, whatever the form of government or lack of government. Therefore, we must be prepared to take the risks by stabilizing the line in southeast Asia. I believe it is as important to do so there as it is in Berlin." Repeating his earlier point that Vietnam itself was secondary, McGee told Gruening:

> I believe it would be a mistake to become involved in the kind of democracy that exists in Vietnam. They will probably not have democracy there in the Senator's time or mine. We in this country have been working at it for 200 years and have a little way to go. Their kind of government is their business; but we can create an opportunity for them behind the line [*sic*] to assert national independence. That is a secondary priority. The first priority is that we draw the balance of the world so as to withhold from potentially great powers all the resources that are so urgently needed in that part of the world.

That same day (February 24), 27 Members of the House of Representatives, primarily Democrats, also joined the Vietnam Debate in a series of speeches supporting and defending the administration's position and attacking the idea of negotiations.[27] (At about the same time, as was mentioned earlier, approximately the same number of House Democrats, some of whom were members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, sent a letter to the committee expressing their concern about the increasing involvement of the U.S. in Vietnam, and asking for hearings on the subject. This request was denied.)

Organized by the administration and by the Democratic leadership of the House and the Foreign Affairs Committee, and featuring speeches by the leadership, these House speeches were keynoted by an articulate liberal Democrat from New Jersey, Cornelius E. Gallagher, a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, who was becoming one of the foremost House spokesmen for the administration in the field of foreign affairs. Gallagher set the emphasis and tone of the proceeding when he declared,

> The talk of neutralization and abandonment of our commitment in southeast Asia gives new validity to the argument of the Communists that we will grow tired, impatient, and weary in Vietnam and retire and leave the field to them and that their conquest will be won by default. . . . Can anyone seriously believe that neutralization of South Vietnam would not

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[27] For the House debate on Feb. 24, 1965, see *ibid.*, pp. 3430 ff.

> mean immediate Communist takeover there and a new battle beginning in Thailand the next day?
>
> The advocates of such a policy must understand that our abandonment of commitments to protect freedom in southeast Asia is a recognition that we expect Communist China to absorb all of southeast Asia. Are we prepared for some future negotiations for the partitioning of Hawaii which is on the collision course of the Communists on their way to Seattle?

Gallagher was joined by Majority Leader Carl Albert and by the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Thomas E. Morgan (D/Pa.), both of whom voiced their support for the President. Their remarks were followed by supporting statements from a number of other Democrats from various parts of the country, as well as from several Republicans, including Peter Frelinghuysen (N.J.), a respected senior minority member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Interesting comments on the U.S. role in Vietnam were made by two of those who participated in the House colloquy, Dante B. Fascell (D/Fla.) and Lucien N. Nedzi (D/Mich). Fascell, who subsequently introduced the first version of what became the War Powers Resolution, and was later chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, remarked on the difficulty of dealing with subversion in Vietnam or elsewhere:

> . . . we have not solved the basic problem of how to deal effectively in non-military terms with what is commonly called subversion, either military, economic, or political. We are willing and should be willing to commit the necessary manpower, matériel, and resources to meet any military threat, but we must also look one step ahead and be working to obtain those solutions which will permit us to deal effectively with subversion without being forced into a partial or full military response.
>
> Vietnam is not the last place that we are going to meet subversion.
>
> The United States cannot afford to be nibbled to death and we are not going to be nibbled to death.
>
> We have made that clear. No enemy should have any doubt about that. The history of the American people is clear, that we will stand up, fight and die if necessary to protect what we believe in.
>
> But we face a new kind of warfare and we must be prepared to deal in every way with that new kind of warfare.

Nedzi, who later became a key member of the antiwar group in the House, said:

> There are two ultimate ways to end any war: You either beat the enemy in a full scale confrontation, or you negotiate a settlement. That is obvious. If we do not have an all-out war, then we will ultimately have some settlement by negotiation. But the blunt truth is that in Vietnam today, there is little, if anything, that is negotiable.
>
> We are in a situation where events compel us to continue a policy in between escalation on the one hand, and withdrawal on the other. It is a difficult position, inconsistent with characteristic American preference for quick and clear solutions. Regardless of the difficulties, however, we must persevere.

The only discordant note was sounded by George E. Brown, Jr., a liberal California Democrat, who strongly opposed U.S. policy in Vietnam (and later was very active in opposition to the war), even though he said he welcomed the discussion of the issue by Members of the House.

Other liberal Democrats did not agree with Brown at that stage, however, as exemplified by the position taken by New York's Jonathan B. Bingham, also very active in later opposition to the war, who said, "appeasement is not the way to measure the peace," even though military efforts alone could not win the war in Vietnam, and there must, therefore, be a political settlement. Rejecting both extremes, Bingham said that the President had strong support from the public in avoiding an "oversimplified either/or position." Like the President, he said, the public did not want to widen the war or "let the Communists have their way."[28]

The Vietnam Debate continued in the Senate on March 1, 1965, just after the release by the administration of its white paper on Vietnam, and at a time when James Reston reported that the President was becoming increasingly concerned about congressional and public criticism of his handling of the Vietnam situation. Reston wrote:[29]

> President Johnson is making no excuses for anything he has done in Vietnam, and is visibly irritated with the critics of his policy.
>
> He knows he is now up against the most difficult policy decision of his life, and that all the options open to him in Vietnam are risky, but this is all the more reason, in his view, for the country to back the President and stop the critical chatter.
>
> This is not a new attitude on the part of Lyndon Johnson. When he was majority leader in the Senate, he often criticized President Eisenhower's domestic policies but invariably backed him without a murmur on major foreign policy questions.
>
> Accordingly, his attitude toward Democratic Senators who have differed with him publicly on Vietnam has not been to assume that they are expressing what they believe to be a better course of action, but to charge them with letting him down—sometimes merely to get themselves in the headlines.
>
> He is particularly sensitive to charges that he is not talking enough to the American people about the complexities and risks of the Vietnamese war. He carries around in his pocket a series of private polls that purport to show that the vast majority of the people not only know what he is doing but approve what he is doing.
>
> The mail coming into the congressional and newspaper offices here does not support his polls, but when anybody ventures to mention this criticism, he insists that the polls are right, the people understand his problems better than the newspapers, and besides, the Congress authorized the action he has taken, with only two opposing votes.

During Senate debate on March 1 there were a number of speeches commenting favorably on the State Department white paper and on Johnson's handling of Vietnam, beginning with Mansfield, who said:

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[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 3411-3412.

[29] *New York Times*, Feb. 27, 1965.

> The paper helps to make clear why this Nation has been compelled to take steps which it has taken in recent weeks, if South Vietnam is not to be abandoned, if the United States is to honor its commitment to help the Vietnamese of the south to retain a degree of choice in their future. In that respect, it should satisfy those who have been insisting that the President should address an explanation to the American people as to what is involved in Vietnam. The President, so far as I can see, is trying to keep a lid on a dangerous volcano in Southeast Asia.

Senator William Proxmire (D/Wis.), a liberal but somewhat independent Democrat from Wisconsin, agreed with Mansfield: "I wholeheartedly support the President's policy. I admire the restraint and perseverance he has shown in carrying it out. The present policy offers the best chance for us to achieve an enduring peace in this enormously complex situation." A number of Senators agreed with Proxmire, including Russell B. Long a Democrat from Louisiana, Millard Simpson (R/Wyo.), Gale McGee, Howard Cannon (D/Nev.), Jack R. Miller (R/Iowa), Fred R. Harris (D/Okla.) and Hugh Scott (R/Pa.). Harris, a young, liberal activist who was in his first (and only) term, said, "The long view of the study of history indicates that appeasement or withdrawal in the face of aggression has never been conducive to the establishment of a lasting peace. . . . we must again apply the principle that unless we are willing, now, to take the risks involved . . . in drawing the line in South Vietnam, we shall have to draw it somewhere. I, for one, would like to see it drawn in South Vietnam, rather than in Thailand, in Malaysia, in the Philippines, in Hawaii, or in San Francisco and Seattle."[30]

That same day (March 1), Representative Melvin Laird, chairman of the House Republican Conference, spoke on behalf of House Republicans and, among other things, criticized the administration's handling of Vietnam. According to Laird, who had vigorously opposed the 1962 Agreement on Laos, "The situation in South Vietnam cannot be resolved effectively or satisfactorily for free world interests until the United States frankly asserts that it is no longer bound by the declaration and protocol on the neutrality of Laos because of the repeated violations on the part of the Communists." In the meantime, he said, negotiations appeared likely, and "There is, in my mind, little doubt that the conflict in Vietnam will end in the not-too-distant future in some form of compromised settlement that cannot help but lead to an eventual Communist takeover."[31]

In New York, former Vice President Nixon called for increased bombing of North Vietnam.[32]

On March 4, the Vietnam Debate was resumed in the Senate, with speeches by Russell Long and by two liberal Democrats, Stephen M. Young of Ohio and Vance Hartke of Indiana, defending the President's position. (Later, Young and Hartke became strong opponents of the war.)[33] On March 16, Indiana's other Senator, liberal Democrat Birch Bayh, added his support for the President.[34]

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[30] For the Senate debate on March 1, see *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 3775 ff.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 3882.
[32] *Washington Post*, Mar. 2, 1965.

Meanwhile, the deployment to U.S. Marines to Danang was announced on March 6, and the Vietnam Debate was not resumed. The "debate" had, in one sense, run its course after a fairly extensive presentation of opposing points of view, and by early March competing domestic problems, especially civil rights, were receiving even more attention, as was the year's other legislative business.[35] The President's own campaign for support for his Vietnam position, particularly the receptions for Members of Congress at the White House, may also have helped to reassure Members and to lessen the intensity of the issue.

Occurring, as it did, at a time when basic decisions were being made about the U.S. role in Vietnam, the Vietnam Debate provided an opportunity for Members of Congress to express their views on the subject. In doing so, they doubtless hoped to have some influence on each other, on the President, and on the public. As far as influencing each other, however, there appears to have been no change in the existing division of congressional sentiment. Moreover, to the extent that it tended to polarize attitudes, the debate may have tended to force some Members who might have preferred to remain silent to announce their support for the President and for increased U.S. military activity.

As for influencing the President and his associates, the debate appears, if anything, to have resulted in a hardening of attitudes in the executive branch and a more vigorous defense of the administration's position by the President and his associates. There is no indication, despite Mansfield's encomiums about the role of the Senate, that the debate produced more careful or thoughtful decisionmaking or greater consideration of alternatives by the Executive.

The Vietnam Debate was a substitute for other forms of action, and did not directly relate to or lead to efforts to influence the making of decisions through the means available to Congress. There was a conspicuous absence of congressional committee activity during February-March 1965 with respect to U.S. policy toward Vietnam. Not a single public or executive session hearing on Vietnam was held during this period by either the Senate Foreign Relations Committee or the House Foreign Affairs Committee except for an executive session on February 9 of the Far East Subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee. (The next consideration of Vietnam by the Foreign Relations Committee was at an executive session on April 2.) Moreover, except for a few comments by Mansfield, only a few of the more junior members of the Foreign Relations Committee participated in the Vietnam Debate.

Why was the Foreign Relations Committee, in particular, so seemingly passive and its senior members so apparently uninvolved, not only with respect to the Vietnam Debate but in terms of holding hearings or taking any other action? The principal reason, arising from factors deeply embedded in the folkways of American politics and of the Senate, as well as being an attribute of the personalities of those involved, was that at this stage in the evolution of Congress' role in the Vietnam war there was a great reluctance to criticize the President, particularly in public, or to engage in partisanship in foreign affairs. In addition, of course, foreign policy is a sensitive subject which often is best discussed behind closed doors. For these and other reasons, private advice and counsel were to be preferred. At that time, the private advice channel appeared to be open and the President appeared to be willing to listen. This was Fulbright's own reason for refraining from public comment and for communicating directly with Johnson during this time. "I had supported him and we were good friends," he said. "I thought I could persuade him to change his mind."[36]

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[33] For these proceedings, see *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 4201 ff.

[34] *Ibid.*, pp. 5196-5198. See also p. 4743 for Senator Norris Cotton's (R/N.H.) somewhat reluctant endorsement of the President's actions.

[35] After civil rights demonstrations in Alabama, which resulted in violence, the President asked Congress on Mar. 15, 1965 to approve a new voting rights bill.

During an interview some years later, Bryce Nelson, a journalist who was an assistant to Senator Church at the time of the Vietnam Debate, was asked about the factors which shaped that debate and the reasons for the lack of a more direct and effective challenge to the administration by those Senators who questioned the direction of Vietnam policy. His answer touches on another very important aspect of the role of Congress in the war, especially the Senate, namely, the tendency of Senators, whose power and tenure in office depend primarily on their reelection in individual states, to act singly, with an eye toward their own interests, rather than collectively. Speaking of Church and others who questioned the war at that time, Nelson said:[37]

> I don't think they felt they could get many supporters. They were all fed by caution and fear of political reprisal. They were also trapped by the way they approached life, which is that they have been so trained to seek individual election and reelection and glory and so on that they probably didn't think sufficiently in terms of collective action. Most of these people just don't act collectively with other people. They do their own thing and hope that other people will go along with them.

"A Cloud No Bigger Than a Man's Hand" *

One of the most basic and seemingly most enduring characteristics of the American political system is the latitude that the public affords political decisionmakers, especially in foreign affairs. An understanding of this phenomenon, which has been called "permissive mood"[38] or "permissive consensus,"[39] is vital to understanding why there was public and congressional support for U.S. involvement in the Vietnam war in 1965, and why this support continued for so long thereafter.[40]

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[36] CRS Interview with J. William Fulbright, Feb. 18, 1983.

[37] CRS Interview with Bryce Nelson, Dec. 12, 1978.

[38] Gabriel A. Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950).

[39] V. O. Key, Jr. *Public Opinion and American Democracy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957).

* Kings I, ch. 18, verse 44.

[40] For studies of American public opinion and the Vietnam war see (in order by date of publication): Sidney Verba, et al., "Public Opinion and the War in Vietnam," pp. 317-333; Hazel Erskine, "The Polls: Is War a Mistake?" *Public Opinion Quarterly,* 34 (Spring 1970), pp. 134-150;

Continued

Simply stated, once policy has been established, the public[41] tends to allow considerable flexibility to the Government and will act to reduce that flexibility only when the policy no longer appears to be valid, or when the costs of carrying it out are considered unacceptable.

Although it is not possible to demonstrate empirically the configuration of public attitudes toward U.S. policy in Vietnam prior to 1965—there were virtually no polls on the subject before the end of 1964 and the beginning of 1965[42]—it is clear, as was indicated earlier[43] that as of 1965, when the U.S. decided to become more ac-

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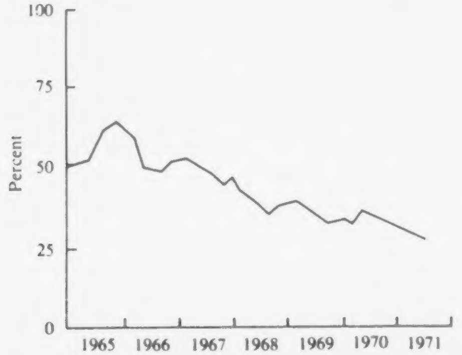
Converse and Schuman, "'Silent Majorities' and the Vietnam War," pp. 17-25; Sidney Verba and Richard A. Brody, "Participation, Policy Preferences, and the War in Vietnam," *Public Opinion Quarterly,* 34 (Fall 1970), pp. 325-332; Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion,"* cited above (there is also a useful article by Mueller in which he summarizes many of the basic findings of his book with respect to public support for the war: "Trends in Popular Support for the Wars in Korea and Vietnam," *American Political Science Review,* 65 (June 1971), pp. 358-375); William L. Lunch and Peter W. Sperlich, "American Public Opinion and the War in Vietnam," *Western Political Quarterly,* 32 (March 1979), pp. 21-44. Another useful study is John M. Benson, "The Polls: U.S. Military Intervention," *Public Opinion Quarterly,* 46 (Winter 1982), pp. 592-598.

As students of public opinion have recognized, the analysis of U.S. public opinion toward the war is beset with methodological problems such as the frequency of the polls, the questions asked, the wording of questions—all of which are discussed in this literature.

It is particularly difficult, given the available evidence, to analyze changes in public opinion. The only question which was asked frequently (25 times, beginning in August 1965 and ending in May 1971) and in the same form was Gallup's "mistake" question: *"In view of the developments since we entered the fighting in Vietnam, do you think the United States made a mistake sending troops to fight in Vietnam?"* The following graph, which is derived from a graph by Mueller *(War, Presidents and Public Opinion,* p. 56), is based entirely on responses to that question:

Public Support for the Vietnam War, 1965-1971



Yet the data from the mistake question are not a reliable index of support for and opposition to the war because of the wording of the question and the lack of follow-up questions. The mistake question, as Lunch and Sperlich have noted, raised a problem of inference: a respondent's current policy preference could not necessarily be inferred from his or her response to the question. Moreover—and there is no way of knowing to what extent this occurred in Gallup's polls—many of those who thought that the war was a mistake wanted to use greater force. A study in 1968 by the Survey Research Center at the University of Michigan, which asked the mistake question followed by three options (withdrawal, keeping forces in but negotiating, or taking a stronger stand even if it meant invading North Vietnam), found that of those who responded that the war was a mistake, almost as many were for escalation as were for withdrawal. See Converse and Schuman, "Silent Majorities' and the Vietnam War," p. 20.

For this reason, Lunch and Sperlich, who call the mistake question "a rough indicator of nforcused uneasiness and doubt about the Vietnam War," rely primarily on data from variously vorded questions in which respondents were asked how they felt about withdrawal versus scalation. Based on these data, Lunch and Sperlich conclude (pp. 25–26): "The figures on ithdrawal sentiment . . . indicate that for a long period from late 1964 to late 1968, support for is option [withdrawal] never extended beyond 20 percent." ". . . only after years of punishment om the war, did the American people begin to support withdrawal in a major way." (p. 22) The llowing graph by Lunch and Sperlich (p. 26) plots the trend of support for escalation and ithdrawal.

tively involved, about 80 percent of the public believed that if the U.S. withdrew from Vietnam the Communists would take control of all of Southeast Asia, and, by the same percentage, agreed that this should not happen.

There was considerably less agreement, however, with respect to what the U.S. should do to keep the Communists from taking control of all of Vietnam and of Southeast Asia. Studies in January

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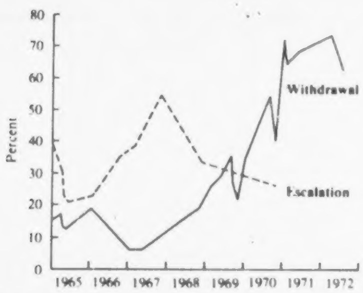
Withdrawal and Escalation Support, 1965-1972



One of the sources used by lunch and Sperlich and by Mueller is the studies by the Univ. of Michigan Survey Research Center which asked this question every two years for six years: "*Which of the following do you think we should do now in Vietnam*?"

[In percent]

	Fall of 1964	*Fall of 1966*	*Fall of 1968*	*Fall of 1970*
Pull out of Vietnam entirely	32	19	9	8
Keep our soldiers in Vietnam but try to end the fighting	32	37	36	22
Take a stronger stand even if it means invading North Vietnam	24	34	36	29
No opinion	11	10	12	15
No interest	—	—	7	18

(Data on the Survey Research Center polls are from Mueller, *War, Presidents and Public Opinion*, pp. 82-97. In the polls taken in the fall of 1964 and the fall of 1966, the question was prefaced by: "*Have you been paying any attention to what is going on in Vietnam?*" Hence, the category of "no interest" was included in the results of the 1964 and 1966 polls.)

These data from the SRC provide further confirmation of the endurance of American public support for the U.S. role in the war. As late as the fall of 1970, after the U.S. had begun to withdraw its forces, 56 percent of the public still indicated support for keeping U.S. troops in Vietnam, although within this total there was a division between those who wanted to try to end the fighting and those who wanted to take a stronger stand.

[41] The public, of course, is not an undifferentiated mass. There are several publics. In particular, the distinction is often made between the "active" or "attentive" public, which is estimated to consist of about 10 percent of the total, and the other 90 percent of the population. From this 10 percent come not only most of the opinion leaders but most of the political activists who perform the role of raising issues and generating debate.

A recent study suggests that there are three publics: "The bottom stratum [the "apoliticals"] includes the roughly 20 percent of the population who do not monitor the political realm at all and are unlikely to be mobilized to political action by even the most extreme political crisis or case of economic self-interest. At the top of the continuum is a group of active and attentive individuals [the "activists"], who represent approximately 5 percent of the population. For many political matters the effective size of this group could be much smaller, measuring a fraction of 1 percent of the population as a whole. The great majority of the population [the "mass public"] lie between these two extremes and monitor the political process half-attentively, but they can be alerted if fellow citizens sound the political alarm." W. Russell Neuman, *The Paradox of Mass Politics: Knowledge and Opinion in the American Electorate* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986), p. 186.

[42] Prior to the end of 1964, as Mueller points out (*War, Presidents and Public Opinion*, p. 35), the public was "strikingly ignorant" of the Vietnam war. He notes that in the spring of 1964 the Gallup Poll found that 63 percent of the public "was giving little or no attention to developments in South Vietnam," and in June 1964 a study by the Survey Research Center found that 25 percent of respondents "had heard nothing about the fighting in Vietnam." In its study in the fall of 1964, the Center found that, despite the increased publicity given the war as a result of the Gulf of Tonkin incidents of Aug. 1964, 20 percent of respondents "still were paying no attention to what was going on in Vietnam."

Mueller dates the beginning of the Vietnam war, for the purpose of public opinion analysis, as mid-1965.

[43] See p. 73 above.

and February 1965 by both Gallup and Harris[44] indicated that while there was support for existing U.S. policy and for "holding the line," there was also substantial support for negotiating a settlement and withdrawing.

This division of opinion and lack of firm agreement on what the U.S. should do was even more apparent in polls taken during April 1965 after the first U.S. combat troops had been sent to South Vietnam, as indicated by a Gallup Poll released on April 7:[45]

> *"Some people say that we should try to start peace negotiations now with communist leaders; others say that we should use more troops and airplanes to put us in a stronger position. Which group would you be more inclined to agree with if you had to decide between these two policies?"*

	Percent
Negotiate	41
Send more troops	42
No opinion	17

Harris reported a similar finding in a Survey released on May 3, 1965.[46] When respondents were ". . . asked directly whether they favored or opposed sending in more U.S. troops, one in four say they can't make up their minds, and the rest split right down the middle on the issue. (Forty percent in favor; 38 percent opposed.)"

What did the public believe the U.S. should do? This question elicited a variety of responses, both in an open-ended poll by Gallup and in a question-specific poll by Harris. These were the results of the open-ended Gallup Poll released on April 23, 1965:[47]

> *"In your opinion, what would you like to see the United States do next about Vietnam?"*[48]

	Percent
Withdraw completely from Vietnam	17
Start negotiations, stop fighting	12
Continue present policy (continuing military action, but remaining ready for negotiations)	14
Step up military activity	12
Go all out, declare war	19
Other	5
No opinion	28

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[44] See pp. 41, 72 above.

[45] Gallup, *The Gallup Poll*, vol. 3, pp. 1932–1933.

[46] *Washington Post*, May 3, 1965. The news release by Harris, from which this is quoted, did not give the wording of the question.

[47] Gallup, *The Gallup Poll*, vol. 3, p. 1934.

[48] This April 23 Gallup Poll revealed only minor differences between Democrats and Republicans, the principal one being that Republicans were more in favor of withdrawing as well as going "all out," and less in favor of continuing present U.S. policy:

[In percent]

	Republicans	*Democrats*
Withdraw completely from Vietnam	15	12
Start negotiating, stop fighting	10	13
Continue present U.S. policy	12	15
Step up military activity	8	9
Go all out, declare war	17	12
Other, no opinion	38	39

At about the same time, Harris conducted a poll in which he asked respondents to choose among three specific courses of action (as he had in November 1964 and in January and February 1965), and this more structured question produced not only a sharper division of preferences but also a far lower percentage of no opinion responses. These were the results, as reported on May 3, 1965:[49]

> *"Which of these three courses do you favor for the United States in Vietnam: Carry the war into North Vietnam, at the risk of bringing Red China into the war; negotiate a settlement with the Communists and get out now; or continue to hold the line there to prevent the Communists for taking over South Vietnam?"*

[In percent]

	Late April 1965	*Early April 1965*	*March 1965*	*February 1965*	*November 1964*
Hold line	43	48	46	40	40
Negotiate	28	31	35	23	20
Carry war into North Vietnam	20	17	12	13	20
Not sure	9	4	7	24	20

Despite differences in the questions asked, these Gallup and Harris polls produced similar results: about 30 percent in both polls favored negotiations and withdrawal and about 20 percent favored a major escalation of the war.[50]

What conclusions can be drawn about the state of public opinion in the spring of 1965? First, the public believed that if the U.S. withdrew from South Vietnam the Communists would take control of South Vietnam and of Southeast Asia, and felt that this should not be allowed to happen. Second, while about 45 percent of the public supported holding the line through existing U.S. policy and operations in South Vietnam, a substantial number—about 30 percent—preferred to negotiate a settlement and to withdraw, while about 20 percent wanted to use greater force. Third, when faced with the choice of either negotiating a settlement and withdrawing or of sending more U.S. troops, the public was almost evenly divided, but when asked whether the President should seek a negotiated settlement a high percentage (about 80 percent) of respondents agreed that he should do so.

In short, the public was divided, not over goals but over means, and there does not appear to have been strong support for either the existing or any alternative course of action by which to achieve U.S. goals. The high percentage (28 percent) of "no opinion" responses to Gallup's April 23 open-ended question about what the U.S. should do next suggests also that a large number of people did not, for whatever reason, know what could or should be done.

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[49] *Washington Post,* May 3, 1965.

[50] The major difference in the result of the two polls was that whereas Harris reported that 43 percent wanted to "hold the line," in Gallup's poll only 14 percent wanted to "continue present policy," while 12 percent favored increased military activity (presumably to hold the line but not to engage in a major escalation of the war). Even adding these two categories, however, does not bring the total response in the Gallup poll up to Harris' 43 percent that favored holding the line. The difference is to be found in the 28 percent of Gallup's respondents who gave no opinion versus 9 percent of "not sure" for Harris.

The only alternative that appears to have attracted broad public support was the combination of holding the line while seeking, without expanding the war, to strengthen the negotiating position of the U.S. and South Vietnam, and to explore a diplomatic settlement. And that, of course, was what the Johnson administration seemed to be trying to do.

Among some elements of the "active" or "attentive public," however, there were new signs of discontent, especially in the universities and among liberal intellectuals and leaders in literature, the arts, and religion. On February 16, 1965, the *New York Times* carried an advertisement opposing the bombing of North Vietnam and urging negotiations to end the war in Vietnam which was signed by 400 college and university faculty members in the Boston area, and which was reprinted on March 1 to include several hundred additional signers from other colleges and universities in the northeast. An "Open Letter to President Johnson on Vietnam," it declared, among other things: "If we are not to widen the war beyond all conscience, as reasonable men we must initiate negotiations while there is still time."

On February 19, a group organized by the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE), and co-chaired by two prominent men who were becoming leading activists in the antiwar movement, Dr. Benjamin Spock in New York City, a pediatrician, and H. Stuart Hughes, a professor of history at Harvard University, placed a similar advertisement in the *New York Times* signed by about 32 members of the board of SANE and by about 90 others from the arts, literature, medicine, scientific research, religion, labor, and various colleges and universities.[51]

On February 28, Lewis Mumford, a Quaker, and a noted architect, planner and social philosopher, then president of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, who had been given the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Johnson in 1964 in recognition of his accomplishments and his contribution to the country, wrote to the President decrying the decision to increase the use of force in Vietnam, and declaring that those who were opposed to that course of action would oppose it by every lawful means:[52]

> Instead of using your well-known political adroitness to rescue our country from the military miscalculations and political blunders that created our impossible position in Vietnam, you now, casting all caution to the winds, propose to increase the area of senseless destruction and extermination, without having any other visible ends in view than to conceal our political impotence. In taking this unreasonable course, you not merely show a lack of decent respect for the opinions of man-

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[51] Included in the group of signers was Hans J. Morgenthau, a professor at the University of Chicago, as well as John P. Roche, a member of the faculty at Brandeis University, and chairman of the liberal political group, Americans for Democratic Action. In the spring of 1965, Roche became an assistant to President Johnson and a strong supporter of the war (although critical of certain aspects of the way it was fought).

[52] Johnson Library, EX ND 19/CO 312.

> kind, but you likewise mock and betray all our country's humane traditions.
>
> This betrayal is all the more sinister because you are now, it is plain, obstinately committing us to the very military policy that your countrymen rejected when they so overwhelmingly defeated the Republican candidate.
>
> Before you go further, let us tell you clearly your professed aims are emptied of meaning by your totalitarian tactics and your nihilistic strategy. We are shamed by your actions, and revolted by your dishonest excuses and pretexts. What is worse, we are horrified by the immediate prospect of having our country's fate in the hands of leaders who, time and again, have shown their inability to think straight, to correct their errors, or to get out of a bad situation without creating a worse one.
>
> The Government has forfeited our confidence; and we will oppose, with every means available within the law, the execution of this impractical, and above all, morally indefensible policy. There is only one way in which you can remove our opposition or regain our confidence; and that is to turn back from the course you have taken and to seek a human way out.

President Johnson appears to have seen and probably to have read Mumford's letter,[53] but there is no record that it was ever answered.[54] According to Sophia (Mrs. Lewis) Mumford, the letter "had great impact and was re-published widely, by private citizens, by ministers and by groups. A number of people wrote they were writing to the President to call his attention to the letter." [55]

On March 24, 1965, the first "teach-in" on Vietnam was held at the University of Michigan.[56] The "teach-in," which typically involved meetings of students, which were held after class hours and were not sponsored by the institution, to which faculty and others spoke about U.S. policy in Vietnam, followed by discussion. This became a very popular idea, and spread rapidly to other campuses during the spring of 1965.[57]

These signs of growing dissent were discounted by policymakers. In an interview some years later, McGeorge Bundy was asked about President Johnson's reaction to that part of Bundy's February 8, 1965 report on his trip to Vietnam in which Bundy stressed the importance of getting public support for what "at best" would be a long struggle. Bundy replied "He [Johnson] just put the memo in a pigeon hole. . . ." Bundy was asked whether Johnson underestimated the extent to which the public would oppose the war:[58]

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[53] This is based on a handwritten "L" (for Lyndon) at the top of the first page, which was the marking the President usually made on a document to indicate that he had read it, or, as in this case, a notation by a staff member to indicate that the document had been seen by the President.

[54] The files at the Johnson Library do not contain any response to the letter. In a letter to CRS on Mar. 10, 1988, Sophia (Mrs. Lewis) Mumford stated that although she and her husband had been told by a White House aide that the letter had been put on the President's desk, she did not recall that it had been answered. Ms. Nancy M. Shawcross, Curator of Manuscripts at the Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania, where Mumford's papers have been deposited, stated in a letter to CRS on Mar. 31, 1988 that the Mumford papers do not contain an answer from the President.

[55] Letter to CRS from Mrs. Mumford, Mar. 10, 1988.

[56] For a description, see the *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 1965.

[57] For a collection of materials see Louis Menashe and Ronald Radosh (eds.), *Teach-ins: USA* (New York: Praeger, 1967). For materials on a notorious teach-in at the University of California at Berkeley in May 1965, see James Petras (ed.), *We Accuse* (Berkeley: Diablo Press, 1965). See also Sandy Vogelgesang, *The Long Dark Night of the Soul: The American Intellectual Left and the Vietnam War* (New York: Harper and Row, 1974).

> I think he underestimated, and I think we all did, the virulence and the earliness of opposition to the war. The notion that people would get tired of it if nothing happened in three years I think was never far from his mind. He had a lot of recollections that would reinforce that. But the antiwar movement as such I think was a surprise. It certainly was to me. The situation was not intrinsically different from Korea in terms of the rights and wrongs of the issues. . . . We simply hadn't estimated the kinds of new forces that were loose in the land in the middle 1960s. I don't think anybody foresaw in 1964 and 1965 the overall cresting of feeling which had begun in 1964 at Berkeley and would have crested without Vietnam, as it did in France, which had no Vietnamese problem, in the late 1960s.[59]

Bundy added that the Johnson administration, as well as that of Nixon, was "behind the curve," but that "most governments most of the time are behind large, new emerging forces in their first stages." Bundy was asked whether Johnson had a strategy for handling the public opposition to his Vietnam policies that began to develop in the spring of 1965. "Ignoring it," he replied.

Greater U.S. Action Seen as Necessary to Prevent Defeat

In early March 1965, after the decision on February 26 to begin ROLLING THUNDER and to send the two battalions of Marines to Danang, the President and his associates were faced with the apparent need for additional steps to shore up the situation and with renewed requests for military and other forms of action. On March 4, the JCS resubmitted their recommendation of February 11 for an eight-week schedule of airstrikes on the North and for the deployment of a Marine brigade to Danang and an Army brigade to Thailand.[60]

In a memorandum on March 1, Chester Cooper told McGeorge Bundy, who had been away for several days, that "the situation on the ground in Vietnam is slipping," and that the President had "expressed concern and understandable frustration re this problem." The President, Cooper said, "keeps wondering if we are doing all we can." In response, Cooper told Bundy, "I have talked at length with Unger, [William Bundy's deputy and coordinator of the Vietnam Committee] on Bright Ideas and Bright Boys. Have resuscitated the Psy [Psychological] War Committee. Have pressed for careful examination by Unger's Committee of all ideas, no matter how superficially kooky they might initially appear." [61]

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[58] CRS Interview with McGeorge Bundy, Jan. 8, 1979.

[59] Bundy's reference to Berkeley is to the student activism at the University of California in Berkeley in the fall of 1964 which led to a mass demonstration against the administration of the university, and to a "sit-in" in the main administration building which ended when police, called in by Governor Edmund Brown, a Democrat, arrested 773 demonstrators. The immediate issue involved the question of "free speech" on the campus (the so-called Free Speech Movement), but the more fundamental issue was the alleged oppressiveness of the large university and of society in general.

The "Berkeley student revolt," as it was called, was led by the "new left" organization, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which was formed in 1960 from the student department of the "old left" League for Industrial Democracy. SDS's first president was Thomas E. Hayden, later a leading anti-war activist. See Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Random House, 1973), and James Miller, *"Democracy is in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987). For the events in Berkeley see especially Seymour Martin Lipset and Sheldon S. Wolin (eds.), *The Berkeley Student Revolt* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Book, Doubleday, 1965), and Max Heitich, *The Beginnings: Berkeley, 1964* (New York: Columbia Univ., 1971).

As was noted in pt. II of this study (p. 250), SDS members were active in the antiwar movement beginning in the spring of 1964, although the organization itself did not take a position until late 1964 when its national council decided to protest the U.S. role in Vietnam by staging a march on Washington in April 1965. During the fall of 1964, however, a number of individual SDS chapters actively considered the issue.

[60] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 404, JCSM-121-65, Mar. 4, 1965.

After reviewing the current state of affairs, Cooper told Bundy that the "real question . . . is where are we going?" The U.S., he said, was in a "new phase" of the war. "The hope is that we will bang sense (or fear) into Hanoi, and will significantly damage VC capabilities in the South. So far so good. But suppose neither happens at present levels of activity? Do we step them up, or turn them off? Presumably, the former." But there were three emerging factors that should be considered: "The fragile relationship among the generals, the 'peace movement,' and the faltering pacification program." First, although the Quat government might be acceptable, there was the possibility of discord among the military. Second, while the peace movement in Vietnam appeared to be "relatively insignificant," the Buddhists "have been making strange noises lately and are in a position, in the light of their following and the general war weariness, to give it a good shove." Third, "unless we get cracking fast (i.e., tomorrow), on reversing the trend in the pacification program, our air activity will have bought us considerable risks, but not much else."

"This lugubrious rack-up," Cooper told Bundy, "could add up to a situation where the pressure for negotiations has expanded. . . ."

Cooper concluded by saying, "We cannot simply assume things will go as we plan or hope," and he proposed that an effort be made to develop options for an alternative course of action should one be needed.

The next day (March 2), the President held a breakfast meeting from 8:25 a.m. until about 9:30 a.m. with Rusk, McNamara, Vance, and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Harold Johnson, and made the decision to send General Johnson and others, including McNaughton and General Goodpaster, to Saigon for a report on what could be done to improve the situation on the ground in South Vietnam.

According to General Johnson in an interview some years later, when he and the President were coming down in the White House elevator after the meeting, the President "bored his finger into my chest and he said get things bubbling, General . . . his finger was boring in literally in my chest. . . . He wanted to stabilize that situation, and he very clearly was not going to lose Vietnam. This was very clear." [62]

In a cable to Ambassador Taylor informing him of General Johnson's visit, Secretary of Defense McNamara, speaking for the President, made a sweeping promise of support: "In developing list [of additional actions needed], you may, of course, assume no limitation on funds, equipment or personnel. We will be prepared to act immediately and favorably on any recommendations you and General Johnson may make." [63]

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[61] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam. Unger had replaced Forrestal as chairman of the Vietnam Coordinating Committee.

[62] CMH, Department of the Army Interview with General Harold K. Johnson, Nov. 20, 1970.

In connection with the meeting, McNaughton had drafted a memorandum, "Possible Actions Within South Vietnam," listing 30 steps which could be taken in the South.[64] He proposed that General Johnson be sent to Vietnam to review the situation and to recommend improvements. He also suggested various military actions, including the use of small South Vietnamese units, some of which were controlled by U.S. Special Forces, "in extended offensive guerrilla operations in VC-controlled areas." Another suggestion was to send U.S. mortar units to support ARVN forces. Another was to have Korea send a division of combat forces to Vietnam.

He also suggested several "Tailored Incentives and Actions," among which were: "Send assassination squads after VC leaders"; "Establish a program of substantial bounties payable for turning in Viet Cong, particularly their leaders" and, "On a selective basis use rewards to top leaders to induce them to accept US instructions regarding actions required to unify leadership in the country and regarding timing of and attitudes toward negotiations."

McNaughton also suggested the possibility of assigning the "Lansdale irregulars"—Lansdale and others from the CIA who had been associated with him in Vietnam in the 1950s—to Vietnam, perhaps to a specific section of the country.

Later that day (March 2), William Bundy sent McNaughton the State Department's reply.[65] He said that there was "no policy problem" with most of the suggestions (including those cited above) with these exceptions: First, in the case of the U.S. mortar units, "This would be first US combat ground units. Query if increased effectiveness warrants psychological drawbacks and casualties." Second, in the case of the Koreans, "Strong query whether there would not be psychological drawbacks exceeding military usefulness. Are the Koreans popular, or should we not wait to see?" Third, in the case of the Lansdale irregulars, Bundy apparently had some reservations, but his reply has been excised.

This was the text of John McNaughton's proposal and William Bundy's replies:

McNaughton's Recommendations	*William Bundy's Reply*
A. GENERAL	
1. Send General Johnson to Vietnam for as long as necessary to review thoroughly with Westmoreland the present use of all DOD assets and to determine what additional forces and techniques, if any, can be of value.	1. Fine.

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[63] *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 337, Defense to Saigon 6181, Mar. 2, 1965. In a memorandum on Mar. 1, 1965 to all departments of the Department of Defense, McNamara also stated: "I want it clearly understood that there is an unlimited appropriation available for the financing of aid to Vietnam. Under no circumstances is lack of money to stand in the way of aid to that nation." *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 474.

[64] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[65] Same location.

McNaughton's Recommendations	*William Bundy's Reply*
B. AIR STRIKE OPERATIONS	
2. Remove all restrictions on use within South Vietnam of any US land- or sea-based aircraft, including the restrictions requiring Vietnamese personnel in FARMGATE aircraft [U.S. manned, with at least one South Vietnamese on board to enable the U.S. to claim that the Americans on board were there for "training" purposes].	2. Yes, subject to consultation with Ambassador Taylor in view of his concern over the US appearing to take over the war.
3. Organize large-scale air attacks on Viet Cong base areas, including night and day pattern bombing in such areas as the VC Do Xa base area. B-52s based on Guam could be used to supplement other aircraft.	3. Same as 2. Particular query whether B-52's would have unfavorable psychological effect exceeding their increased effectiveness. Are they really needed?
4. Increase the frequency and effectiveness of BARREL ROLL operations in Laos [U.S. airstrikes against the Communists].	4. We are querying [William] Sullivan [U.S. Ambassador to Laos] immediately on this.
5. Increase night aerial activity known infiltration routes in South Vietnam. Include use of infra-red and night photos.	5. No policy problem.
GROUND OPERATIONS	
6. Organize massive use of all surveillance-type aircraft on a grid basis [entire areas] to cover VC movements in selected areas of Vietnam, with a capability to call for rapid ground and air attacks.	6. No policy problem. Query from operational standpoint whether grid basis preferable to province basis.
7. Employ ranger-type ARVN and or US Special Force-controlled CIDG [Civilian Irregular Defense Groups] units in extended offensive guerrilla operations in VC-controlled area.	7. No policy problem.
8. Support ARVN with US mortar units to increase accuracy of mortar fire.	8. This would be first US combat ground units. Query if increased effectiveness warrants psychological drawbacks and casualties.
9. Use small patrols with long-range radios to report on VC movements and locations.	9. No policy problem.
10. Use up to a division of Korean combat units.	10. Strong query whether there would not be psychological drawbacks exceeding military usefulness. Are the Koreans popular, or should we not wait to see? (We remain opposed to GRC [Government of the Republic of China on Taiwan] military units of any sort.)
C. NAVAL OPERATIONS	
11. Immediately send out additional small Navy craft for operation by US and/or Vietnamese crews for coastal patrol and other duties.	11. No policy problem.
12. Implement promptly the recommendations of the Navy team now considering methods of creating US-GVN sea and air patrols for coastal- and river-security as near watertight as possible.	12. No policy problem.

McNaughton's Recommendations	*William Bundy's Reply*
D. TAILORED INCENTIVES AND ACTIONS	
13. To increase the numbers and to improve the morale of South Vietnamese forces, provide a subsistence allowance "in kind" to the regular and irregular troops and to their dependents in such a way as to provide a massive increase in compensation (for example, 50%).	13. No policy problem.
14. Put teeth in the draft law.	14. No policy problem.
15. Make it profitable to be on the side of the government—for example, reward and publicize heroes, businesses, villages, etc., who contribute to the war effort.	15. No policy problem.
16. Send assassination squads after VC leaders.	16. No policy problem.
17. Establish a program of substantial bounties payable for turning in Viet Cong, particularly their leaders.	17. No policy problem. Suggest VC be specifically named wherever possible.
18. On a selective basis use rewards to top leaders to induce them to accept US instructions regarding actions required to unify leadership in the country and regarding the timing of and attitude toward negotiations.	18. No policy problem.
19. Carry out expeditiously reforms required among Montagnards.	19. No policy problem.
F. PSYCHOLOGICAL OPERATIONS	
20. Send Carl Rowan to Vietnam to review the information and propaganda program for influencing the South Vietnamese.	20. Fine.
21. Give [Barry] Zorthian [head of public affairs in the U.S. Mission] and the USIA a blank check on funds and equipment for operations within South Vietnam.	21. Fine.
22. Develop and promote a simple and multi-point positive program to propagandize.	22. Fine.
23. Improve methods of reporting combat operations and contacts.	23. No policy problem, but usual query as to whether reporting burdens are not already excessive.
G. US ORGANIZATION	
24. Increase tours of duty of US key personnel now in South Vietnam by 3-6 months.	24. No policy problem.
25. Shift the police responsibility to MACV.	25. We are favorably inclined for the provinces, but strongly doubt whether this is right in the cities.
26. Place USOM [U.S Overseas Mission, the term used for the U.S. foreign aid mission] and CIA under MACV.	26. [Excised].
27. Immediately fill all USOM shortages with military personnel.	27. Affirmative.
28. Substantially expand USOM staff, especially in the provinces and districts, with military personnel wherever required.	28. We are inclined to favor this, but would listen carefully to [James S.] Killen's [Director of USOM in Vietnam] objections.

McNaughton's Recommendations	*William Bundy's Reply*
29. Shift AID emphasis from long- to short-term objectives with quick pay-offs—for example, more housing, more junks, higher pay, more "pigs and fertilizer" programs.	29. This has in fact been going on for some time; we have been impressed with the AID argument for at least a small number of significant long-term projects.
30. Assign the "Lansdale Irregulars" to Vietnam, perhaps assigning them to a specific section of the country.	30. [Excised].

On March 6, while General Johnson was in South Vietnam, McGeorge Bundy sent the President a "Personal and Sensitive" memorandum in which he reported on a two and a half hour meeting on Vietnam which he, Rusk and McNamara had held the night before.[66] Bundy said that he and McNamara thought that the "chances of a turn-around in South Vietnam remain less than even; the brutal fact is that we have been losing ground at an increasing rate in the countryside in January and February. The air actions have lifted morale, but it is not clear how much and there is no evidence yet that the new government has the necessary will, skill and human resources which a turn-around will require." He added that he, Rusk and McNamara, ". . . agree that whatever the odds and whatever the difficulties, we must continue to make every conceivable effort in the pacification area."

He said they also agreed that the U.S. approach to pacification was faulty, and that, "Last night Bob McNamara said for the first time what many others have thought for a long time—that the Pentagon and the military have been going at this thing the wrong way round from the very beginning: they have been concentrating on military results against guerrillas in the field, when they should have been concentrating on intense police control from the individual villager on up." [67]

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[66] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

[67] McGeorge Bundy also commented on the management of the U.S. Mission, saying that he and McNamara favored replacing Taylor with U. Alexis Johnson and naming a younger man, possibly McNaughton, as "Chief of Staff" in the Mission. "Max [Taylor] has been gallant, determined, and honorable to a fault, but he has also been rigid, remote and sometimes abrupt. We all recognize that Taylor has served an enormously important purpose in keeping American opinion from division and criticism, but our inclination would be to bring him back not later than the first of June for a final round of consultation and discussion, and release him from his duties at the end of the year for which he originally contracted."

On March 8, Henry Cabot Lodge, U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam in 1963-1964, who after talking with President Johnson on Feb. 26, 1965, had been made a special consultant to the President, submitted recommendations for action in Vietnam, one of which was that the U.S. needed a single executive responsible for programs to combat "subversion-terrorism," which he called "the great unsolved problem in South Vietnam." He also stressed the importance of the Buddhists who, he said, were "crucial" in Vietnam, and he proposed programs to encourage them to assume greater responsibility, including U.S. financial support for their various educational, cultural and religious activities. He also proposed a plan for the development of Southeast Asia comparable to the Marshall Plan, which "should aim at eliminating illness and widening the area in which justice prevails." Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam. In sending Lodge's recommendations to the President, McGeorge Bundy said in an accompanying memorandum (same location) that day (March 8) that he had told Lodge, "that it might be troublesome in his and my Party [Republican] if he were to be seen ostentatiously discussing Vietnam with you again." Lodge told Bundy he was aware of the problem and would understand if the President did not see him to talk about his recommendations. In his memorandum, Bundy said that the President might want to shake hands with Lodge and thank him for the report, and he said he (Bundy) would talk to Lodge and arrange also for others in the government to do so.

On March 9, Bundy met with Lodge, and then from 12:39 p.m. to 12:50 p.m. the President took a walk around the White House grounds accompanied by Lodge and Bundy.

Bundy said that they had also discussed the possibility of sending a large allied force to the central highlands as a show of force and a deterrent to Communist escalation, and that although he knew Taylor was doubtful of such a move, "in the heat of discussion last night Rusk, McNamara and I all thought it worth serious further exploration." [68]

In addition, the three men talked about the international political situation and agreed that it was, ". . . important to defend and insist on our policy in every forum." [69]

Bundy said that they also discussed the question of negotiations, and that Rusk and McNamara, ". . . both feel, for somewhat different reasons, that it is important to show that we are ready to talk about Vietnam—always on our own terms—in all appropriate international channels. . . . But Bob goes a lot further. He believes that we should find a way to have real talks in an international meeting. (I think his motivation is that we will need a conference table if things go worse, as he expects.)" Bundy's own opinion was that although there should be detailed studies of the matter, ". . . we can always get to the conference table when we need to, and there is no great hurry about it right now. (Dean Rusk agrees, though he wants to keep the British just happy enough to hold them aboard.)"

Finally, McGeorge Bundy told the President that he, Rusk and McNamara had agreed on the need for "contingency thinking" in the event of a "sharp deterioration" in South Vietnam. (Rusk had reservations about doing so he said, because of his feeling that, "when men even look as if they were planning for defeat, they make defeat more likely. . . ." "And he is right," Bundy added.) But such contingency thinking would have to be done ". . . very, very privately. . . . So our current plan is that there should be no paper work on this subject at all, but simply some intensive discussions limited completely to the three of us and one subordinate each. There will be no papers, and this mission will not exist anywhere except in this memorandum." [70]

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[68] William Bundy's office had already talked to the Australian Government about this possibility (Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Washington to Saigon 1876, Mar. 3, 1965) as well as having exchanged cables about it with Taylor.

[69] Apparently the President had urged Rusk and Ball to meet with foreign Ambassadors as well as to make more public appearances. During March 1965, they did both, and the Central File of the State Department, Pol 27 Viet S, contains several memoranda on their meetings with Ambassadors.

[70] Even though Rusk was concerned about the possible effect of contingency planning, William Bundy's office had already begun to explore the subject in a paper prepared on February 2 by Leonard Unger, "Contingency Planning Against Rapid Deterioration of the Situation in South Vietnam." U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S. (The paper was classified secret, and only six copies were distributed.) There were two likely possibilities, the paper said. The first would be a declaration of South Vietnamese neutrality and non-alignment as a result of pressure from the Buddhists, followed by a coalition government, a call for the withdrawal of U.S. forces, and possibly the opening of negotiations with North Vietnam. In this event, the U.S. should either "seek to foster a coup" by those who were opposed to such a government—a move which "might well have to be backed by open U.S. military support," and would probably result in a government which "would have to be highly authoritarian" to survive—or the U.S. could accept such a government and, as in the case of Laos, seek, along with other governments, to work with the new government to preserve its independence from communism.

The second possibility, Unger said, was "a continuing a series of coups and counter-coups that might lead to virtual anarchy." In this case, he said, the U.S. "might feel obliged to step in directly with either U.S. forces or some mixed forces from the SEATO countries." This, he said,

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After reporting to the President on the meeting which he, Rusk and McNamara had held, Bundy talked to the President and it was apparently agreed that the three men would meet with the President at Camp David, the Presidential retreat in the Catoctin Mountains in Maryland. On March 8, Bundy sent the President a memorandum on scheduling the meeting in which he said: ". . . McNamara particularly thinks it a very good idea to have a quiet talk this way . . . I would add my own warm support to Bob's. I think a quiet talk in the mountains would be very good for all of us." [71]

On March 9, McGeorge Bundy had breakfast with McNaughton, who had just returned after four days in Vietnam, and listened while McNaughton, his choice for a new "chief of staff" in Saigon, discussed the situation in Vietnam and the alternatives facing the U.S.[72] According to Bundy's notes, McNaughton said that the situation was "troubled, endangered," and that General DePuy, the J-3 (operations) officer on Westmoreland's staff, had given a "grim prognosis." There were three possible courses of action, McNaughton added:

1. Pressure on North—a squeeze
2. No squeeze—but sustained reply.
   SVN: you have to pour it on. Lots of Allied troops. US + if poss[ible].
3. It's a loser: how to get out with limited humiliation.

Later that day (March 9), the President held a Tuesday lunch [73] from 1:20 p.m. to 3:40 p.m. with Rusk, McNamara and McGeorge

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"could be labeled a holding action pending the re-establishment of responsible government, pending UN action to organize a provisional government."

Bundy's office was also beginning to study the question of a negotiated settlement. (In late January 1965, Taylor had sent to the State Department a memorandum on the subject drafted by U. Alexis Johnson, which discussed the objectives of negotiations and the possible concessions that both sides would make. See Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, pp. 352-353.) "U.S. Conditions for a Detente in Vietnam," the title of another paper by Unger on Mar. 5, 1965 which was sent from Bundy to Rusk (U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S), examined how the U.S. "might take the first political step away from the present confrontation with North Vietnam." If U.S. military and political pressure on the North was successful, Unger said, the North Vietnamese would indicate their readiness for talks. They would demand cessation of U.S. air attacks on North Vietnam, withdrawal of U.S. forces, and an end to U.S. assistance to the South. The U.S., Unger recommended, should reply that air attacks would cease after North Vietnam agreed to cease its support of the Communists in the South, and after talks had resulted in a system of verification by which the U.S. could be "satisfied" that such support had ceased. In return for a demand for withdrawal of U.S. forces, the U.S. should insist on the withdrawal "of at least the NVN cadres" in the South.

[71] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

[72] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy.

[73] The "Tuesday lunch" was the name given to informal meetings of President Johnson and a small group of his principal foreign affairs and military advisers at luncheon on Tuesdays at which there was discussion of and action on a broad range of foreign and military questions. It was a mechanism instituted by Johnson to limit the number of those participating in Presidential meetings, preferring, as he did, to interact with principals, and wanting to control information about the matters being considered.

In addition to the President, those who attended the Tuesday lunch were the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the President's National Security Adviser. During certain periods, the Director of Central Intelligence was added to the group, and in the fall of 1967 the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was also added. Other top officials were asked to sit in on various meetings or parts of meetings. Beginning in the latter part of 1965, the President's press secretary was also added to the group as a regular member.

In his excellent article on the subject, Dr. David C. Humphrey, archivist at the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, estimates that during the Johnson administration there were 155-160 Tuesday luncheons. "Tuesday Lunch at the Johnson White House: A Preliminary Assessment," *Diplomatic History*, 8 (Winter 1984), pp. 81-101. The first was on Feb. 4, 1964. During the period January-July 1965, there were 14 such meetings, 12 of which occurred consecutively beginning on March 9, followed by others on June 29 and July 20. Most of these dealt with Vietnam. (The

Continued

Bundy. McNaughton was invited to join the group, where he repeated what he had told Bundy. After some discussion, the President commented: "I'd much prefer to stay in SVN—but after 15 mo [months] we all agree we have to do more." [74]

The next day (March 10), the President met with Rusk, McNamara, and McGeorge Bundy at Camp David from 4:45 p.m. to 6:50 p.m., following which they were joined at dinner by Valenti, Moyers and Marvin Watson (White House chief of staff).

According to McGeorge Bundy's brief notes of the meeting of the President with Rusk, McNamara and himself,[75] Rusk said that at some point the U.S. would face whether to escalate or negotiate. The U.S. needed to "get something" started on the "diplomatic track," he added, asking, "Would the British wish to explore?" The President replied that he was "interested in *any honorable basis,*" but that he "very much doubts that they're [the North Vietnamese] ready. We've not done anything yet. If so, let's do it in a measured way—*before* encouraging Brits because *if* you do [encourage them], you'll read it in the papers and you *lose* ground."

With respect to the question of U.S. military actions, the President said, "Nearly everyone chose to forward this more than LBJ, but I did *cross bridge* in my own mind in December [1964]." But, he added, "If you can show me any reasonable out I'll grab it."

He continued:

> To give in = another Munich.
> *if not* here—*then Thailand.*

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only known notes of these 14 meetings are the handwritten notes on some of them taken by McGeorge Bundy, which are in his papers in the Johnson Library.)

Although larger meetings were also held, and the National Security Council continued to meet, the Tuesday lunch increasingly became the center of decisionmaking, much to the consternation of some sub-Cabinet and other officials who felt hampered by its impact on the normal functioning of the policymaking system. William Bundy says that in the Johnson administration before mid-1965 the process of making decisions on Vietnam was "both thorough and many-sided," but that after mid-1965 this was not the case. The Tuesday lunches, he says, were ". . . a procedural abomination—rambling, lacking in a formal agenda or clear conclusions, infinitely wearing to the participants, and confusing to those at the second level who then had to take the supporting actions. This is not to suggest that the key substantive decisions would necessarily have been different, still less that the outcome could have been changed. But the process was a nightmare. . . ." William Bundy, "The National Security Process: Plus Ça Change. . .?" *International Security* 7 (Winter 1982/1983), pp. 94-109 at 101. Others, however, especially some of those who participated in the luncheons, found them to be very beneficial. See Humphrey, pp. 92-94.

In 1965, Henry F. Graff, a noted historian at Columbia University, was invited by the White House to interview President Johnson, Rusk, Ball, McNamara and McGeorge Bundy (and later W. W. Rostow), General Wheeler, and Bill Moyers on the subject of foreign policymaking in the Johnson administration. The purpose of the invitation, which was extended by E. Hayes Redmon, an assistant to Presidential Assistant Bill Moyers and formerly a student of Graff's, was to improve the image of the press and the public of Johnson's conduct of foreign affairs. (Shortly before he was invited to conduct the interviews, Graff had written an article, "Isolation Again—With a Difference," which was published in the *New York Times Magazine* on May 4, 1965, in which he decried the renewed isolationist attitudes which he said had resulted, in part, from public frustrations over the Vietnam war.)

As a result of the interviews, Graff wrote two articles, "How Johnson Makes Foreign Policy," and "Teach-In on Vietnam—by the President, the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, and the Under Secretary of State," which were published in the *New York Times Magazine* on July 4, 1965 and Mar. 20, 1966, as well as a book in which the same and additional material was included: *The Tuesday Cabinet* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1970). The articles and the book consist primarily of Graff's recounting of his conversations with those who made up the "Tuesday Cabinet"—that is, the principal persons who attended the Tuesday lunches. His goal, as he said in the Introduction (p. 7), was to "coax from each an explanation or amplification of his stand." Unfortunately, while the purposes of the White House may have been achieved, there is little of historical or analytical value in these accounts by Graff.

[74] Same location.

[75] Same location. (emphasis in original)

Come hell or high water, we're gonna stay there.

beg, borrow or steal to get a government.

"You gotta get some Indians under [*sic*] your scalp," he said. "We immobilized for 15 days [the period in February when the U.S. delayed the beginning of ROLLING THUNDER]. This is March. He endured this [the delay in acting] through a campaign [the 1964 Presidential election]."

That same day (March 10), McNaughton sent McGeorge Bundy a copy of a draft outline on "Action for South Vietnam," [76] (a revised draft of which McNaughton sent to McNamara on March 24)[77] which he began by listing "US aims":

> 70%—To avoid a humiliating US defeat (to our reputation as guarantor).
>
> 20%—To keep SVN (and then adjacent) territory from Chinese hands.
>
> 10%—To permit the people of SVN to enjoy a better, freer way of life.
>
> ALSO—To emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from methods used.
>
> NOT—To "help a friend," although it would be hard to stay if asked out.

The situation, McNaughton said, was "deteriorating." "Politically, 50% chance of coup within 3 weeks. Militarily, SVN has been cut in two with GVN control in north reduced to enclaves." Unless the U.S. took stronger action, the following would occur:

> (a) GVN officials will adjust their behavior to an eventual VC take-over.
>
> (b) Defections of significant military forces will take place.
>
> (c) Whole integrated regions of the country will be totally denied to GVN.
>
> (d) Neutral and/or left-wing elements will enter the government.
>
> (e) A popular-front regime will emerge which will invite the US out.
>
> (f) Fundamental concessions will be made to the VC.
>
> (g) Accommodations to the DRV will put SVN behind the [Iron] Curtain.

These were three possible courses of action, McNaughton said (and went on to discuss in the memorandum):

> (1) Progressively squeeze North Vietnam;
>
> (2) and/or add massive US ground effort in South Vietnam;
>
> (3) and/or downgrade the apparent stakes [downplay the importance of helping South Vietnam, thus minimizing damage to U.S. credibility].

He proposed that the U.S. should "progressively squeeze North Vietnam," while being prepared to deploy large-scale U.S. forces in South Vietnam if necessary to supplement the attacks on the North or to use as a "circuit-breaker" if attacks on the north appeared to be leading to "undesired escalation." At the same time, there should be efforts along a "negotiating track."

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[76] Johnson Library, Warnke Papers, McNaughton File.

[77] See p. 180 below.

"It is essential," McNaughton concluded, "—however badly SEA may go over the next 2-4 years—that US emerge as a 'good doctor.' We must have kept promises, been tough, taken risks, gotten bloodied, and hurt the enemy very badly. We must avoid harmful appearances which will affect judgments by, and provide pretexts to, other nations regarding how the U.S. will behave in future cases of particular interest to those nations—regarding US policy, power, resolve, and competence to deal with their problems."

In Saigon on March 5, meanwhile, General Johnson was reviewing the situation with Taylor, Westmoreland and others in the U.S. Mission as well as with Premier Quat and several military leaders, including Ky and Thieu. Taylor said that the "basic unresolved problem" in South Vietnam was inadequate security for the people, and that until this was corrected other programs would not be effective.[78] There were three causes of the lack of security, he said. "The first was lack of satisfactory progress in destroying the VC insurgents in the countryside." In part, this resulted from a shortage of manpower: "We have never been able to achieve a numerical superiority over the VC in excess of 5 to 1 whereas all historical examples in the recent past suggest the need of a superiority of counterinsurgency forces of the order of 10-20 to 1." Moreover, because of weaknesses in the pacification program, which Taylor attributed to the instability of the South Vietnamese Government, "military successes when they have occurred are frequently not exploited; areas cleared are not held; areas cleared and held are not developed and the VC infrastructure remain in the villages and hamlets ready to emerge when the troops move on."

The second cause of the lack of security, Taylor said, was "the continuing capability of the VC to replace losses and [to] increase in strength." This resulted from the openness of the borders of South Vietnam—2,500 miles on land and sea—to infiltration from North Vietnam, as well as from the success of the southern Communists in obtaining men and supplies within the South. It was essential, he said, to prevent infiltration, but this could only be done if the North Vietnamese were compelled to cease infiltration: "If the frontiers cannot be closed from the inside—and we are convinced that they cannot—then the only way to stop infiltration is to get Hanoi to order it to stop."

Taylor recognized that even without infiltration, Communist forces in the South could continue to obtain men and supplies locally, but he apparently felt that the insurgency could be brought under control once infiltration ended.

The third cause of the lack of security, Taylor said, was "our inability to establish and maintain an effective government":

> SVN has never been a nation in spirit, and, until recently, has never had a government which the people could regard as their own. Even now their instinct is to consider any government as intrinsically their enemy. They have always been di-

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[78] Taylor's summary of his comments, "Ambassador Taylor's Analysis of the Overall Situation in Vietnam," was included as an attachment to General Johnson's report, cited below. On March 7, Taylor sent a two-part cable to Washington summarizing his report and the consensus of those present at the meeting with General Johnson as to areas to be explored in subsequent meetings. U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 2879, Mar. 7, 1965.

> vided by racial and religious differences, which over the centuries their alien rulers have sought to perpetuate. As a result, there seems to be no cement to bind together the various elements of a heterogeneous society, no instinctive herding together even under the threat of war. Since the fall of Diem and the sudden removal of the restraints imposed by his dictatorial regime, the natural tendency to disunity and factionalism has been allowed free play, both among the civilian politicians and among the generals. The resulting field day has been marked by the series of demonstrations, bonze immolations and military coups which have produced the political turbulence of the last 15 months.

Taylor added that the weaknesses resulting from governmental instability, especially the deficiencies in the pacification program, could not be overcome "until some reasonably effective government is established and maintained for a prolonged period—for months at least, perhaps for years." "This statement," he said, "does not suggest that we cannot make significant progress even under present conditions, but it does emphasize the unlikelihood of quick results and the inadequacy of US aid, no matter how massive, to effect sudden changes in the national characteristics and inbred habits which lie at the root of our difficulties."

General Westmoreland began his March 5 presentation to General Johnson's group by describing the situation:[79]

> Throughout the RVN the Viet Cong hold the initiative. They have had continuing success in their efforts to consolidate political gains in the rural areas; to increase their military strength by a combination of infiltrated cadre and levies on available manpower; and to improve their organization, weaponry, and logistic capability. Through the use of military action, intimidation, and propaganda, they are implanting a sense of the inevitability of VC success.

The South Vietnamese Government was continuing to function, Westmoreland said, but the outlook for achieving an effective central government within the near future was not encouraging:

> Over the short term, it is unlikely that the most important requirement of all can be provided South Vietnam: A central national authority which will assume the responsibilities of leadership, will take the necessary actions to foster national discipline, and will issue firm guidance and give strong support to the ministries and to the provinces.

"Without such a government," Westmoreland added, "one cannot contest the Viet Cong in the political or psychological arena; one cannot eradicate the attitudes of 'wait and see'; one cannot hope to have the motivated and aggressive soldiery which will carry the fight to the enemy." But the South Vietnamese were a "resilient people," he said, and this fact "gives hope that there is more time available than we might think; time in which, if properly exploited, the needed national leadership could evolve."

Unless remedial steps were taken, Westmoreland said, in six months, "the configuration of the RVNAF [Republic of Vietnam

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[79] Westmoreland's report, "COMUSMACV's Military Estimate of the Situation in Vietnam," was included as an attachment to General Johnson's report, cited below.

Armed Forces] will essentially be a series of islands of strength clustered around district and province capitols clogged with large numbers of refugees in a generally subverted countryside; and the GVN itself will be beset by 'end the war' groups openly advocating a negotiated settlement. . . . Our net evaluation is simply that we are headed toward a VC take-over of the country, sooner or later, if we continue down the present road at the present level of effort."

Westmoreland recommended that the U.S. take "whatever measures are necessary" to "postpone indefinitely the day of collapse" in order to "buy sufficient time for other pressures on the DRV to take effect." A "minimum program" would include increased U.S. tactical air support for South Vietnamese forces; improved surveillance and control of supplies being infiltrated through coastal waters, with the U.S. Navy playing a more active role; better research and analysis for targetting air and artillery attacks.

In addition to deploying the Marines to Danang, Westmoreland said, "It may be necessary to bring in ground forces elsewhere, for identical purposes [defense of a base] or indeed to prevent a collapse in some particular area at a critical time."

Concluding his review, Westmoreland said that his proposals would have policy consequences: "The measures which I have suggested would bring into being a new basic policy toward the war in SVN. The US would be committed to do whatever is necessary militarily to prevent defeat. Indeed, such a policy seems gradually to be evolving from actions already taken."

If the U.S. became more directly and actively involved, Westmoreland said, "it is entirely possible that the adverse trends would be reversed. The VC are not 10 feet tall. . . ."

After this briefing, according to one authoritative account,[80] General Johnson met privately with Westmoreland and his general staff:

> It quickly became obvious to the Army brass in Saigon that the Chief of Staff had come with the intention of getting Taylor and Westmoreland to recommend increased U.S. ground force deployments as per the President's wishes. Major General [Delk] Oden, then on the MACV staff, recalled: "We gave him [the Chief of Staff] a regular briefing for about two hours and then he asked everyone to leave the room but the generals. Then he said, 'Gentlemen, as you know, I don't come as the Army Chief of Staff. I am here as a representative of the President of the United States. Mr. Johnson asked me to come and tell you that I came with a blank check. What do you need to win the war?' "

In the meetings between General Johnson and individual South Vietnamese leaders, which focused primarily on military matters, the general attitude of the South Vietnamese was that the military and political situation was fairly stable but uncertain (especially the political situation.) Although there was very little comment about the need for additional U.S. forces, the summaries of the meetings seem to suggest that the Vietnamese were anticipating more vigorous U.S. action.[81]

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[80] Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1986), p. 140.

General Johnson: Winning Might Take Five Years and 500,000 U.S. Troops

General Johnson returned to Washington on March 12, 1965,[82] and on March 14 he submitted his report to McNamara and the JCS.[83] "Time is running out swiftly in Vietnam," the report stated, "and temporizing or expedient measures will not suffice. . . . [But] objectives in South Vietnam can be accomplished provided unrelenting pressure is maintained against the Viet Cong and the DRV, the Vietnamese people continue to demonstrate resiliency, and the United States is willing to undertake major supporting actions without delay. The United States possesses capabilities which, if applied with speed, vigor and imagination, can redress the present military imbalance without excessive risk of widening the conflict."

General Johnson's report generally agreed with Taylor's and Westmoreland's assessments and their proposals for U.S. action. South Vietnamese military forces, the report said, were losing ground, and this would continue unless the U.S. increased its support. Politically, although the populace was resilient, "the prospects for stability in government and military leadership are not considered much better than 50 per cent." As a result, "there are definite limits to the ability of the GVN and the Armed Forces to develop and execute comprehensive projects. What the situation requires may exceed what the Vietnamese can be expected to do. Adjustment to this painful fact is itself part of the problem for Americans who deal with the Vietnamese situation."

General Johnson recommended 21 actions, including those suggested by Taylor and Westmoreland, designed "to arrest the deterioration." [84] Among these was an increase in ROLLING THUN-

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[81] Memoranda of conversation on these meetings are in the papers of General Johnson in the U.S. Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

[82] On Mar. 11, 1965, the U.S. Mission in Saigon sent to Washington an intelligence estimate of the situation in South Vietnam as of March 1. Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington, Airgram A-698, Mar. 11, 1965. There had been, it said, "steady growth in Viet Cong military capabilities, continuing erosion of the GVN position in the countryside, and the general lack of significant progress in pacification." Militarily, "The VC have, in effect, cut the country in two by interdicting lines of communication in southern Quang Ngai and northern Binh Dinh [provinces in the northern part of South Vietnam], where they now control a fifty-kilometer stretch along the coast which is linked to their bases in the mountains." The report concluded: "Unless (and this is primary) North Vietnamese support is checked, GVN military and paramilitary resources increased, pacification goals and concepts refined, administrative efficiency improved, and an adequate political-psychological base created, there is little likelihood of stemming the tide of the VC insurgency. Only U.S. resources can provide the pressures on the North necessary to check Hanoi's support, although some measure of Vietnam Armed Forces participation will be required for psychological and political reasons; the other measures and programs required to stem the tide of VC insurgency are largely internal to South Vietnam, but even here success will require a marked increase in U.S. support and participation."

[83] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, "Report on Survey of the Military Situation in Vietnam," Mar. 14, 1965, with the Taylor's and Westmoreland reports included as attachments. In a transmittal memorandum, General Johnson said that he had considered recommendations of officials of the other military services and of the JCS who accompanied him, and had incorporated "such proposals as I have felt are appropriate," but that, "The report in its entirety is representative of my viewpoint alone."

[84] The 21 actions were:
"1. Provide 3 additional Army helicopter companies to increase mobility of forces.
"2. Provide more O-1 [observation] aircraft to create a saturation surveillance capability.
"3. Establish a Joint (US-RVNAF) Target Research and Analysis Center.
"4. Evaluate payoff from MACV's use of jets in SVN. (Decide later if more needed.)

Continued

DER operations. "This action," the report said, "could tend to broaden and escalate the war. However, it could accomplish the U.S. objective of causing the DRV to cease its support and direction of the Viet Cong aggression. To date, the tempo of punitive airstrikes has been inadequate to convey a clear sense of U.S. purpose to the DRV." (On March 8, Taylor had urged that ROLLING THUNDER strikes be moved north of the 19th parallel "in a slow but steadily ascending movement. . . . If we tarry too long in the South, we will give Hanoi a weak and misleading signal which will work against our ultimate purpose." [85] On the copy of Taylor's cable which he had been given by McGeorge Bundy, the President wrote: "Mc—I agree.") [86]

In order for South Vietnamese forces to go on the offensive, however, further U.S. help was required. The "nature of the conflict" had changed, the report said. The South Vietnamese Army, which had been designed in the 1950s to defend against limited, conventional attack from North Vietnam, and had begun to operate also as a counterinsurgency force beginning in the early 1960s, was "stretched to the limit of its capability" as a result of the growing strength of Communist forces in the South. A "modification of basic policy appears to be required," the report concluded. "The time has come to decide how much the United States is willing to commit to the security of South Vietnam within South Vietnam."

In order to "fill the Vietnamese deficiencies," General Johnson proposed that a U.S. Army combat division be deployed either for security at bases in coastal areas at Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhut, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon and Pleiku, or for security in the provinces of Kontum, Pleiku and Darlac in the central highlands. Using U.S. forces for coastal base security, he said, would free some South Vietnamese Army and Regional Force units for other duty. But he

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"5. Increase the scope and tempo of US air strikes against the DRV.

"6. Remove restrictions on strikes against DRV (e.g., US-VNAF concurrency, denial of alternate targets, ban on classified ammos [ammunitions], narrow geographical limits, requirement to get Washington approval before striking alternates when weather bad).

"7. Increase tempo and scope of SOG [Studies and Observation Group—this was the cover name; the initials actually stood for Special Operations Group—a joint Army Special Forces/CIA unit established in 1964 as part of the new U.S. program of covert operations] activities against the DRV. (This is 34A operations.)

"8. Increase air and naval reconnaissance and harassing operations against the DRV.

"9. Re-orient BARREL ROLL to increase military effectiveness against infiltration.

"10. Use 7th Fleet to coastal patrol and to augment in-country recce [reconnaissance] and strike ability.

"11. Give cash awards for capture of DRV junks.

"12. Streamline procedures to give MACV quick release authority for construction funds.

"13. Create a MACV-controlled stockpile of nearby construction materials and equipment.

"14. Get Australia and New Zealand to run training-center phase of Regular Forces training.

"15. Create US-GVN psychological operations organization.

"16. Position the remaining subsector advisory teams to improve the Popular and Regular Forces.

"17. Provide cash contingency fund to each subsector advisory group ($50-100 monthly limit at first) to be distributed through District Chief to civilians and Popular Force soldiers as a reward for exceptional performance or small civic action projects.

"18. Permit subsector advisory groups to draw on USOM food and building stocks.

"19. Dredge Da Nang, Qui Nhon and Nha Trang to permit berthing of ocean-going ships.

"20. Provide 4 LSTs [landing ship—tanks] and 6 LSUs [landing ship—utility] for logistic support missions.

"21. Accelerate program for more jet-capable airfields and runways programmed by MACV."

Source: Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, "Johnson Report Outline," Mar. 14, 1965, attachment to memorandum from John McNaughton to McGeorge Bundy, Mar. 15, 1965.

[85] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Saigon to Washington 2888, Mar. 8, 1965.

[86] Same location.

did not favor this alternative. "This proposal [using U.S. forces for coastal base security]," he said, "which is logical under a policy of slow escalation, is made not because it is militarily sufficient but because it may be the maximum action which is politically feasible within the U.S. at this time." Instead, he favored sending U.S. forces to the highlands, which he said would have the advantage of freeing more South Vietnamese forces for duty elsewhere and would provide a ". . . clearer area of responsibility to U.S. forces. It also affords an opportunity to interdict the infiltration routes leading into the highland area from Laos, and provides a buffer between the Laos staging area and ARVN units engaged in the coastal area."

General Johnson said it might also be necessary to send additional military units to interdict infiltration, and he suggested, as he had in August 1964, shortly after he became Chief of Staff of the Army, that this could be done by invoking the SEATO Treaty and deploying an international force (primarily Americans) of four divisions along the 17th parallel (the 1954 demarcation line between North and South) from the Gulf of Tonkin to Savannakhet on the Mekong River in Laos.[87] Alternatively, he said, an all-U.S. force could be used. The purpose of this move would be to demonstrate the determination of SEATO and/or the United States to defend South Vietnam, as well as to "stop land infiltration, to pose a threat to North Vietnam in the event other threatening measures fail, and to establish a significant presence for exploitation in any negotiations that might occur in the future." [88]

The idea of deploying an international force along the 17th parallel had been discussed from time to time since at least 1961. After being proposed earlier in 1964 by General Johnson, it was raised by President Johnson with General Westmoreland in December 1964. Westmoreland said he was "enthusiastic," but that forming such an international force would take time and there were more immediate needs.[89]

During the spring of 1965, Westmoreland and DePuy in conjunction with Deputy Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson, developed a plan for deploying an international force along the 17th parallel. (This was the basis of the proposal made by General Johnson in March 1965). According to Westmoreland, it would have been "staged as a regional development project, with engineers extending Routh 9

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[87] In an interview in 1970, General Johnson commented: "I regret now very much that I didn't push that [deployment of an anti-infiltration force] a lot harder than I did (inaudible) at the time [August 1964]. Of course, politically it was simply not possible. It was only two years after the Laos accords of 1962. And they had been come by pretty hard. And it denied completely the Air Force theory that we could stop movement of men and supplies by bombing alone so that you had that argument too." CMH, U.S. Army Interview with Gen. Harold Johnson, Nov. 20, 1970.

[88] According to Krepinevich (*The Army and Vietnam*, p. 144), however, "The Chief of Staff [General Johnson] was quickly apprised of the enormity of the task by the Corps of Engineers. Nearly 18,000 engineer troops, plus large numbers of indigenous laborers, would be needed to support such an undertaking. Work could not begin until November 1, the start of the dry season. Of course there was no guarantee that the infiltrators would not conduct an end run around such a barrier by going through Thailand."

In an interview in 1970 General Johnson was asked, "Do you think you could have closed that area [along the 17th parallel to the Mekong River] off with four divisions," and he replied, "Yes. All of our strategy indicated that." CMH, U.S. Army Interview with General Johnson, Nov. 20, 1970.

[89] William C. Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), pp. 114-115.

[which runs in an East-West direction near the 17th parallel] across the panhandle [of Laos] to the border with Thailand. To provide protection for the road construction, combat troops would be deployed, thereby providing an anti-infiltration screen." [90]

In mid-1966, after infiltration from North Vietnam increased substantially, Westmoreland again developed plans for deploying an international force along the 17th parallel, but "the response from Washington was negative." [91] In mid-1967, Westmoreland developed plans to send the 1st Air Cavalry Division into Laos to conduct anti-infiltration operations, linking with similar operations conducted by the 3rd Marine Division in the area near Khe Sanh, but this too, was opposed.

In addition to General Johnson's bleak report after his trip to South Vietnam, other reports from Saigon in mid-March 1965 described the growing problem. A CIA report on the situation for the week of March 11-17 concluded that, "The pacification effort has virtually stopped in I and II Corps areas [the northern part of South Vietnam], where emphasis is now being placed on holding operations and on refugee relief. III Corps [around Saigon] reported no gains in pacification, while Hop Tac [a special counterinsurgency program, begun in the fall of 1964, in the provinces which encircled Saigon] and IV Corp [the delta, south of Saigon] reported only modest gains." [92]

On March 12, the South Vietnamese Internal Security Council and the U.S. Mission Council, in one of their regular joint meetings, heard a special report by a South Vietnamese officer on the pacification situation in Binh Dinh province, a coastal area in the northern part of South Vietnam, adjacent to Pleiku, where the Communists were very active.[93] Whereas before the Diem coup in November 1963 the Government of South Vietnam had controlled 675 hamlets in Binh Dinh, as of March 1965 it had "firm control" over only 63 hamlets and "daytime control" over 134 more. Since the beginning of February 1965, the Communists had gained control over 131 hamlets in the province. The number of refugees in the province had greatly increased, and the local population had "lost confidence in the GVN because it is no longer effective in rural areas." Morale of South Vietnamese forces was "very low," as evidenced by the passive attitude of troop commanders, the deliberate delays in carrying out orders, the withdrawal from a number of military posts, and the concentration of forces in defensive positions around remaining strong points. Troop discipline was also poor, with frequent complaints by the populace of ". . . the ferocity of and plundering by these troops. . . ." The problem, according to the report, was not lack of South Vietnamese military manpower or local sympathy for the Communists, but the neglected state of the local governmental system, the loss of confidence of the people, and the low morale of the troops.

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[90] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

According to DePuy in an article some years later in which he discussed the idea ("What We Might Have Done and Why We Didn't Do It," *Army*, February 1986), to have deployed such a force as a cordon along the 17th parallel in 1965 or 1964, "would have required mobilization and a major national effort." Otherwise, there would not have been enough available forces (he estimated it would have taken seven divisions) until 1968.

[91] *A Soldier Reports*, p. 197.

[92] U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Central File, "The Situation in South Vietnam," Mar. 17, 1965, OCI No. 0611/65. On March 10, there was a special briefing for Quat, Taylor, and other top South Vietnamese and U.S. officials on the status of Hop Tac. A summary of the briefing is in U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington Airgram A-713, Mar. 16, 1965.

[93] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 2953, Mar. 13, 1965 and Saigon to Washington Airgram A-712, Mar. 16, 1965.

Ambassador Taylor's comment at the end of the meeting was that the report showed clearly that "we are not losing for lack [of] sufficient military forces but because of poor performance."

That same day (March 12), Taylor sent a cable to Washington in which he summarized the political situation.[94] U.S. airstrikes on the North and in the South, together with the landing of Marines, had improved the morale of the South Vietnamese, he said, and given them a "glimpse of light at end of long and tortuous tunnel." The "big question mark" was whether the Quat government "will have strength and cohesiveness to galvanize and exploit this improved atmosphere. . . . Quat and colleagues, as their predecessors before them, until now have had to spend too much time putting out political fires to be able to launch any positive and constructive program of action. Moreover, generals have been engaged in jockeying for position following Khanh's departure and therefore have spent still too little time and energy in providing badly needed leadership and inspiration to armed forces."

On March 9-11, at Baguio in the Philippines, there was a meeting of all U.S. Mission Chiefs (Ambassadors and other heads of U.S. diplomatic posts) in the Far East region, attended also by William Bundy and others from Washington, which concluded that, "U.S. conduct in the Vietnam conflict is not only crucial in itself, but is regarded as a touchstone of the U.S. commitment in the rest of the area." [95] The group also concluded that, "Initiation of air action against North Vietnam has been generally regarded as demonstrating a previously questionable U.S. determination. Many countries believe, however, that the pace of U.S. actions must be further stepped up and our goals further spelled out if our policy is to be clearly understood by both our enemies and our friends."

On March 15, 1965, President Johnson met from 12:02 p.m. to 1:55 p.m. with General Johnson, General Wheeler, Chairman of the JCS, McNamara, Vance, and the other members of the JCS—Adm. David L. McDonald, Chief of Naval Operations, Gen. John P. McConnell, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, and Gen. Wallace M. Greene, Jr., Commandant of the Marine Corps—to review the Johnson report. General Goodpaster, Wheeler's assistant, was also present. There were no representatives from the State Department or the CIA, however, and apparently no members of the White House or NSC staffs attended.[96] There are no known notes of the meeting.

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[94] Same location, Saigon to Washington 2941, Mar. 12, 1965.

[95] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, "Far East Mission Chiefs' Conference, Baguio, March 9-11, 1965," attachment to William Bundy memorandum of Mar. 23, 1965, "Highlight Conclusions of the Far East Mission Chiefs' Conference."

[96] Even though it seems unlikely that there were no White House staff members present, the White House Daily Diary for March 15 does not list any staff participants, and according to the Johnson Library staff, a search of other sources does not indicate that White House staff members were present.

According to General Goodpaster, General Johnson told the President that to win the war could take 500,000 U.S. troops and five years. General Goodpaster said in an interview some years later that General Johnson, "a man of superb capability," had "evaluated the thing very, very carefully," and his estimate ". . . sent quite a shock wave through the administration because they hadn't been talking in those terms or even facing up to that kind of a possibility." [97]

It is not clear what General Johnson was referring to when he spoke of 500,000 troops and five years, but, as noted, he was known to view the conflict as a counterinsurgency, and he had indicated earlier that he thought it could take as much as 10 years to bring the insurgency under control. Although the figure of 500,000 was a remarkable prediction of the approximate number of U.S. forces eventually deployed to South Vietnam, General Johnson apparently was thinking of the number which would be required to fight the counterinsurgency, rather than the more conventional large-unit operations in which U.S. forces subsequently became primarily engaged. According to General DePuy, General Johnson's comment that it could take 500,000 troops and 10 years "was orthodox doctrine for counterinsurgency," based at prevailing assumptions about the ratio of forces needed (8 to 1 or 10 to 1) to win against guerrillas.[98]

At the meeting on March 15, the President approved General Johnson's 21 recommendations, including increased bombing of North Vietnam and Laos, and increased covert SOG activities against North Vietnam, including 34-A operations.[99] He also approved increased air and naval reconnaissance and harassing operations against coastal areas of South Vietnam held by the Communists, but, according to the cable informing Taylor of the President's decision, "DE SOTO Patrols were considered and rejected under currently existing circumstances."

While approving the 21 points, the President did not act on General Johnson's additional recommendation for the deployment of a division of U.S. ground troops or on his recommendation that the U.S. should invoke the SEATO Treaty and deploy four divisions along the 17th parallel.[100]

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[97] CRS Interview with Andrew Goodpaster, Nov. 16, 1978. In his memoirs (*The Vantage Point*, p. 139), Lyndon Johnson said only that "General Harold K. Johnson, Army Chief of Staff, visited Vietnam early in March and went over the worsening military situation in detail with General Westmoreland and his staff and with the Vietnamese Joint General Staff." He did not mention the 500,000 men/five years estimate, or even the fact that he met with General Johnson after the trip and approved his recommendations for increased action.

[98] CRS Interview with William DePuy, Aug. 1, 1988.

[99] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 337–338, 429. For the list of the 21 recommendations, see p. 161 above. For action taken by the President on General Johnson's 21 recommendations, see Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, JCS to CINCPAC, 200019Z, March 1965. In the same location there is a report to the President by General Wheeler on March 27 (CM-522-65) on the status of action on the 21 points.

The 21 points were then included as part of the program of action promulgated by NSAM 328, Apr. 6, 1965. See p. 203 below.

[100] The day after the meeting (March 16), in the cable to Taylor concerning the expanded ROLLING THUNDER program, the State Department suggested that publicity about the program "should be progressively reduced, although in its place there should be picture of GVN and US pursuing with regularity and determination program against the North to enable South [to] restore its independence and integrity and defend itself from aggression from North." Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Washington to Saigon 3000, Mar. 16, 1965. The U.S.

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On March 16, 1965, in preparation for a Tuesday lunch that day, McGeorge Bundy sent the President a "Memorandum for Discussion" in which he summarized the state of affairs.[101] With respect to military action, he reported on the steps being taken to make ROLLING THUNDER and BARREL ROLL (U.S. airstrikes in Laos, begun in December 1964) more effective, and added that major ground force deployment "may soon be necessary for both military and political reasons," and that Defense and State were both reviewing the question and would be making recommendations in a few days.

A number of steps were also being taken, Bundy said, "at the President's direction," to mount political and civil actions equal to if not greater than the efforts being made in the military area, including "close control of the population; new programs to encourage Viet Cong defection; land reform operations; new information and propaganda programs; new incentives to university students; new programs of guerrilla action in Viet Cong-controlled areas; intensified housing and agricultural programs; progressive U.S. political announcements; increased contact at all levels with political and religious groups; greatly increased decentralization of all U.S. efforts in the light of weakness and instability of central government."

With respect to the political and diplomatic position of the U.S., McGeorge Bundy said, "We have largely accomplished the immediate purpose of getting our new level of military action into operation without yielding to clamor for 'negotiations.' We now need to examine both our public and our private view of the conditions for a settlement." Concerning the public position, he said, there was a "strong argument for a more detailed exposition of our conditions for peace, and our view of the future in Southeast Asia." He suggested that a draft of such a statement should be prepared. (The President agreed, and on April 7, 1965 this became his widely-publicized Johns Hopkins speech.)

As for the U.S. bargaining position, Bundy said, "The existing situation in South Vietnam is bad, and the basic condition of any political negotiation is that it should allow us to continue to take actions which will in fact improve the anti-Communist position in South Vietnam. This can only be done by successful pacification, and therefore our object must be to trade off our own trumps in return for enemy actions which will give us advantage in the South." There were three things, he added, that North Vietnam could do: (1) stop infiltration, (2) withdraw from the South those forces and supplies which it controlled, and (3) "order its people" not to use force against the Government of South Vietnam. "None of these is likely at present," Bundy said, "and it is questionable whether any of them will be ordered under the pressure of our air

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Mission was also urged to avoid publicity about the newly authorized program of armed tactical reconnaissance and harassment of North Vietnam—another of General Johnson's proposals which had been approved—"since this would contribute to impression of substantial increase in activity." Noting that reporters would probably learn about these flights, Washington asked Taylor to recommend how to handle the problem, and suggested that the Mission "should consider passing off all route recce [reconnaissance] missions in low key replies to queries as 'routine recce.' "

[101] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

operations alone." Nevertheless, he said, the U.S. should consider the possibility of reducing air attacks on the North in return for actions by the Communists to reduce infiltration and/or the scale of attacks on the South. "Of course it is not essential from our standpoint that we stop hitting the North before serious bargaining begins. But it may be necessary that we have a public price for doing so, if only to make it clear that our position remains careful, reasonable, and measured."

There were, McGeorge Bundy said, three possibilities for settlement: (1) "effective pacification of a wholly non-Communist South Vietnam. This is desirable but hardly possible today. If this is our real target, it is doubtful that we want an early settlement"; (2) a "somewhat Laotian solution, in which a government of national unity would have some members from the liberation front and in which de facto VC control in large parts of the country would be accepted. This is what the French and the Lippmanns have in mind, and our current estimate is that this solution would be acceptable only if some significant U.S. presence remained"; (3) an "explicit partition of SVN, leaving the clearly non-Communist government in control of as large a territory as possible." This might permit the rapid reduction of U.S. forces, "But it is also probable that continuing VC ambition would quickly lead to a situation in which we would have to return."

McGeorge Bundy concluded: "Our eventual bargaining position with respect to all three possibilities will be improved and not weakened if the United States presence on the ground increases in coming weeks. This U.S. ground presence is likely to reinforce both pacification efforts and Southern morale, while discouraging the VC from their current expectation of early victory."

At the luncheon on March 16 of the President, Rusk, McNamara and McGeorge Bundy from 1:34 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. the President pressed hard for action, saying he wanted "more ideas and more horsepower and more imagination."[102] According to McGeorge Bundy's very sketchy notes, the President spoke of providing more security and assistance for the village, including more food, and of the need to strengthen the South Vietnamese Armed Forces. "Get every [South Vietnamese] man under 40 years and get it done. Fight 'em—kill 'em." "Get off that gold watch, Phi Beta Kappa key," he said to the three men, knowing that all of them were members of Phi Beta Kappa, "*Let's get going.*" (emphasis in original)

It is not clear from McGeorge Bundy's notes or other available evidence that there was any discussion at the meeting of the matters covered by McGeorge Bundy in his memorandum. Having met the day before with McNamara, General Johnson, and the members of the JCS, and after approving most of General Johnson's recommendations for action, the President may not have considered it necessary, however, to discuss at the luncheon meeting the subjects mentioned in Bundy's memorandum. He seemed to be impatient with the progress being made, and appeared to be more interested in galvanizing his advisers. Moreover, Bundy's memorandum, a large part of which consisted of a summary of the state of affairs, and which proposed fairly broad areas of discussion rather than specific items for decision, may not have prompted the President to discuss its contents.

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[102] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy, handwritten notes of the meeting on Mar. 16, 1965. These are apparently the only notes of that meeting.

The next day (March 17), as will be seen, General Westmoreland recommended and CINCPAC and the JCS supported the deployment of two U.S. and one South Korean divisions, rather than only the one division recommended by General Johnson.

Although action was the order of the day, General Johnson, while carrying out wishes of his Commander in Chief, apparently was quite reluctant to have U.S. forces, especially the Army, become more involved in fighting the war. In a luncheon meeting in February 1965 with two *New York Times* reporters he was said to have commented that, ". . . he had no great desire to go to war in Vietnam. He knew too well what it would be, Korea all over again, only worse, an enemy using sanctuaries, the United States unable and unwilling to use its full power, all the old frustrations again." [103] According to Gen. Bruce Palmer, who was then Johnson's Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (DCSOPS), "General Johnson, perhaps the most knowledgeable and understanding of any American leader on Vietnam, often remarked that if the United States was not willing to 'go all the way,' that is, to include direct confrontation with the Soviet Union and China, who supplied Hanoi with the means to attack the South, then we had best not go in at all." [104]

When General Johnson was asked in an interview some years later about the U.S. decision to intervene militarily he explained that the U.S. ". . . had no alternative except to deploy forces, if Vietnam were to remain a nation. The alternative was that Vietnam fell to North Vietnam." [105]

While feeling that the U.S. had no choice but to intervene, General Johnson, as will be seen, became very much at odds with the plans being developed by General Westmoreland to use the Army in large search and destroy sweeps. Instead, he favored an anti-infiltration cordon across the top of South Vietnam, as Westmoreland had also proposed, combined with "a lot of scouting and patrolling type of activity by quite small units with the capacity to reinforce quickly." [106]

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[103] Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, p. 490.

[104] Palmer, *The 25-Year War*, (cited above), p. 28.

[105] Interview (one of a series) with Gen. Harold K. Johnson, May 21, 1974, Senior Officer Oral History Program, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

[106] *Ibid.*

Krepinevich relates this story (*The Army and Vietnam*, pp. 171-172): "On a trip to Vietnam in December 1965, after supper one night General Johnson engaged in a gab session with lieutenants and captains of the 1st Infantry Division. The young platoon leaders and company commander told the Chief of Staff that they could not engage the enemy if they were moving around in big outfits. What was needed, they said, was to operate in many small units, constantly moving and patrolling. Although Johnson 'agreed with their philosophy,' he rejected their ideas, since 'we [the Army] were not going to be able to respond to the public outcry in the United States about [the] casualties that might result.'"

General Johnson was particularly critical, during and after his service as Chief of Staff, of the effects of what he called the "indiscriminate application of firepower." U.S. conduct of the war, he said, was not "people oriented . . . we sort of devastated the countryside." He recognized, however, that U.S. forces had been trained for that kind of war, and concluded that while in the future a substitute should be found for large scale conventional operations involving heavy firepower, the U.S. would probably "continue to rely heavily on firepower simply because we can

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According to General DePuy in an interview some years later, General Johnson—"HK," as he called him, "was a counterinsurgency man 100 percent. He thought, and there were a lot of people in Washington that agreed with him, that Westmoreland and DePuy and his other henchmen out there didn't understand the war, that the war was a counterinsurgency and that . . . we were trying to get prepared for a big bashing of the North Vietnamese Army." [107] Rather, DePuy says, Westmoreland and he were convinced that the counterinsurgency program would not succeed unless Communist main force units were kept at bay, thus allowing areas, once cleared, to be secured and pacified. Their concept, he said, was a counterinsurgency concept, based on the Hop Tac plan, in which DePuy had been deeply involved, of using the U.S. Army to seek out (search and destroy) Communist main force units, and once an area was cleared, paramilitary forces would maintain security while civic action teams conducted pacification operations. The justification for bringing in American troops to fight the Communist main force units rather than using the South Vietnamese Army was that, as experience in the first six months of 1965 demonstrated, the South Vietnamese Army was being defeated in its efforts to perform that role, and the Communists were attacking and destroying local paramilitary forces, terrorizing the population and disrupting pacification programs.

The battle at Binh Gia at the end of 1964, DePuy says, at which South Vietnamese forces were badly defeated, was an example of the problem. It was "the first shocker," and it and other defeats which followed in the next several months ". . . impacted very heavily on us. We concluded that the Vietnamese marines, airborne and rangers were not proving to be capable of searching for and destroying these main force regiments; to the contrary, the main force regiments seemed to be searching and destroying the Vietnamese Army and Marine Corps."

There were others in the Army who worried about the use of large-scale U.S. ground forces in Vietnam and about Westmoreland's strategy and tactics. One was Gen. Arthur S. Collins, Jr., who was then deputy to General Palmer. Collins, who subsequently served in Vietnam in 1966-1967 as Commander of the 4th Division and then as Commander of the 1st Field Force in 1970-1971, said in an interview some years later that when the question of sending U.S. combat troops to Vietnam was being considered in the spring of 1965, he prepared a memorandum for General Palmer in which he recommended that the U.S. should not intervene militarily in Vietnam. He said he wrote the memorandum the night before a special meeting of the Joint Chiefs to discuss this subject, having gone back to his office to work on it after dinner, and the next morning he gave it to General Palmer before Palmer briefed the Army Chief of Staff, General Johnson, and the Vice Chief, Gen. Creighton W. Abrams, prior to the meeting of the Joint Chiefs.

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produce the ammunition and we've got very splendid delivery systems for it." He also recognized that the Army was constrained by possible public criticism if it appeared that the use of less than maximum firepower was producing higher U.S. casualties.

[107] CRS Interview with William DePuy, Aug. 1, 1988.

This is General Collins' description of what happened:[108]

> There was no time for discussion, the meeting with the Chief [General Johnson] was early, and all types of alerting, readying units, etc. were going on because there was no doubt that at the highest levels of government they were ready to go. General Palmer handed back my memo as we headed for the briefing room without any comment as to whether he agreed or disagreed.

During the briefing of Generals Johnson and Abrams, which General Collins attended, he said that General Palmer discussed the pros and cons, based on a compilation of views from various branches of the Army on the question of sending U.S. forces, but that General Palmer did not mention any of the points in his (Collins') memorandum.[109] This was General Collins' reaction:

> I can remember being on the verge of saying, "We shouldn't do it." It was one of the few times in my life that I didn't speak up and I have since regretted it. Frankly, knowing the attitude of all the other services and General Johnson's concern about [preventing the] spreading [of] communism, I am sure it would not have made any difference. . . . I guess the reason I didn't speak up was I had so much respect for General Palmer. I figured he knew a lot of things I didn't know and if he didn't bring it up, he had a good reason. I talked to him later on about it and he said, "Well, the Chief [General Johnson] believes this is something that should be done, has to be done." Also, the higher levels of government as well as the great majority of my peers felt that we were still fighting Communism. This was what Vietnam boiled down to, and there was a place you had to stop the Communists.

Reflecting on why he opposed U.S. intervention, General Collins said in the interview:

> . . . When I try to think back to what some of the reasons were, I know I was influenced by Bernard Fall. I'd read a lot of his writings, and I sat in on a seminar in which he had been talking about the problems of fighting in Vietnam and the attitude of the people. He wrote about the French problems and the drain of the young officers. I think I half suspected the draft problems that would develop. Also, I had not been impressed by what I heard in some JCS meetings with the Navy and Air Force developing target lists and the SECDEF [Secretary of Defense] indicating which 2, 3, or 4 targets they could hit. . . . I felt the US would get far more committed than it intended, and it was obvious from the civilian influence on the tactics and strategy that we were just going to nibble away at this Vietnamese problem. The US never does well in that type of conflict, we don't have the staying power. Above all the South Vietnamese people had to fight for themselves and from what Bernard Fall had said, and from what I had heard from

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[108] Interview with Gen. Arthur S. Collins, 1981, Senior Officer Oral History Program, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

[109] General Palmer, who seems to have had some doubts of his own about deploying U.S. forces (see p. 455 below), had been sent to South Vietnam in mid-February by General Johnson, and, based on the trip, he concluded that U.S. forces were required, and required promptly, in order to prevent Communist conquest of South Vietnam. See *The 25-Year War*, pp. 38-39.

some advisers who had been there, the VC and the North Vietnamese had the will, but the South Vietnamese did not.

Army Gen. William B. Rosson, who had served in Vietnam in 1953-1955 with the U.S. Military Advisory Group, was skeptical of the idea of sending U.S. forces to fight in Vietnam. In an interview some years later, General Rosson, who was stationed at the Pentagon in the spring of 1965, said that his reaction when the question of sending U.S. forces was being considered was that, ". . . perhaps the time has come to accept that it simply wasn't possible to produce a situation in South Vietnam in which the government there could command sufficient response from the people to achieve the unity and sense of purpose necessary to deal effectively with the insurgency." [110] "It seemed to me," he said, "that the prospect of our being able, through what I understood was to be a limited military reinforcement, to create a situation that would produce the desired results, was unrealistic."

General Rosson, who in June 1965 became General Westmoreland's chief of staff, said that when it became apparent in June-July 1965 that the U.S. was going to intervene in force, he thought this was a ". . . major strategic mistake. It entailed risks we need not have taken." Other military officers were also skeptical, he said, ". . . but the course of action selected by the administration was clear; [and] as I had come to learn in my military career, once decisions are made by the civilian authorities of our government or by military superiors, it is not the business of subordinates to criticize and complain about them, but to put all shoulders to the wheel and carry them out effectively. I did that. Still, I wish the decision had been otherwise and that we had not gone beyond the commitment of very modest combat forces early in 1965." [111]

In addition to the doubts about U.S. troop deployment on the part of some of the more senior U.S. Army officers, there was a group of younger officers, mostly majors and lieutenant colonels, who had served in South Vietnam as advisers to South Vietnam military forces and province chiefs, and who were very concerned about large-scale military intervention. From their experience, most of them appear to have been convinced that the only effective way to control the insurgency was through a counterinsurgency program by which to provide security to and gain the support of the populace, and therefore that pacification, rather than major military operations, was the proper response. They also generally believed that the U.S. could not fight the war for the Vietnamese; that it was their war and they had to win it. (Most of them also believed, however, that in order for pacification to work, and for the South Vietnamese to win the war, the U.S. would need to continue to provide advice and assistance, and would have to intervene more actively in non-military ways in order to bring about the desired results.)

In May 1965, General Johnson appointed a group of these younger officers to study "new courses of action" for the U.S. to take in Vietnam, and the resulting PROVN report ("Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of South Vietnam"), issued in March 1966, from which General Johnson may have gained some wry satisfaction, concluded that, "Present US military actions are inconsistent with that fundamental of counterinsurgency doctrine which establishes winning popular allegiance as the ultimate goal." [112]

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[110] Interview with Gen. William B. Rosson, 1981, Senior Officer Oral History Program, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

[111] For a further discussion of General Rosson's views, see p. 456 below.

One of the young colonels who was opposed to large-scale U.S. military intervention was Volney F. Warner, who had been a military adviser in a province in South Vietnam in 1963-1964 and was a leader among those emphasizing the importance of pacification. (In 1965-1966, he was a member of the PROVN study group and was subsequently detailed to the White House in 1966 to work with Robert W. Komer, a member of the NSC staff who had been assigned to coordinate U.S. pacification activities. Subsequently, Warner, by then a general, was sent to Vietnam as Commander of the 3d Brigade, 4th Division and Assistant Chief of Staff, G-5, II Field Force, after which he became the senior aide and executive officer for General Westmoreland when the latter left Vietnam in 1968 to become Chief of Staff of the Army.) In an interview some years later, Warner related an incident which occurred in late 1964, when he was attending the Armed Forces Staff College.[113] One of the speakers was the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen. Wallace Greene, who asked, "How many of you would think that US forces should be sent to fight in Vietnam and draw the line against communism there?" According to Warner,

> . . . quite a few hands went up, in fact, most. Then he [General Greene] said, "Well, how many of you do not think we should become involved in Vietnam?" There were about six hands that went up, mine among them. I looked around at that time, and I'll never forget it, because all six of us had been province advisors. General Greene misunderstood, dramatically, the situation, and said, "Well, there are some cowards in every group."

One of the six dissenters became so incensed that he walked out of the auditorium and obtained permission to join General Greene at lunch where he argued with Greene about Vietnam. Warner, who called this a "great act of moral courage," said that the officer in question was later given early retirement as a colonel.

The mistake, Warner said in the interview, was in trying to solve the problem with U.S. troops: "In retrospect, I'm absolutely convinced that we lost the war wrong. We should have fought that war in an advisory mode and remained in that mode. When the South Vietnamese failed to come up and meet the mark at the advisory level, then we never should have committed US forces. We should have failed at the advisory effort and withdrawn."

Additional Requests for Troops

On March 17, Westmoreland requested that another Marine battalion be deployed to Phu Bai to secure the air field at Hue, and that still another be added within a month.[114] CINCPAC and the JCS concurred.[115] In a cable on March 18, Taylor also concurred, based on the "military advantages of thus rounding out the MEB [Marine Expeditionary Brigade]," but went on to say that General Johnson's proposal for deploying a U.S. combat division raised a number of questions:[116]

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[112] A copy of this report, which was declassified at the request of the author, is in CMH. This report will be discussed more fully in pt. IV of this study, forthcoming.

[113] Interview with Gen. Volney F. Warner, 1983, Senior Officer Oral History Project, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

> The introduction of a US division obviously increases US involvement in the counterinsurgency, exposes greater forces and invites greater losses. It will raise sensitive command questions with our GVN allies and may encourage them to an attitude of "let the United States do it." It will increase our vulnerability to Communist propaganda and third country criticism as we appear to assume the old French role of alien colonizer and conqueror. Finally, there is considerable doubt that the number of GVN forces which our action would relieve would have any great significance in reducing the manpower gap.

Taylor analyzed the two possible missions for a U.S. division: either to be assigned combat duty in the highlands or to be assigned to enclaves on the coast to protect key areas and to relieve South Vietnamese forces for use elsewhere. The first would create logistical and communications problems as well as problems of reinforcement and withdrawal. The second would give U.S. troops "a rather inglorious static defensive mission unappealing to them and unimpressive in the eyes of the Vietnamese." With U.S. troops in populated areas, there could also be friction with the Vietnamese civilians. The first mission, he said, ". . . if well done, will make a greater contribution during the present critical period. On the other hand, it is the more exposed and even permits one to entertain the possibility of a kind of Dien Bien Phu if the coastal provinces should collapse and our forces were cut off from the coast except by air. The coastal enclave mission is safer, simple but less impressive and less productive. . . ."

Taylor concluded that it was not desirable to deploy a U.S. division in South Vietnam, ". . . unless there are clear and tangible advantages outweighing the numerous disadvantages. . . ." He added: "Obviously, one division would make some contribution but it remains to be proved that it will be sufficient to reverse the downward trend and give such a lift to the GVN forces that they would perform better by the stimulation of the U.S. presence rather than worse in a mood of relaxation at passing the Viet Cong burden to the U.S." Additional study would be needed, he said, before the U.S. Mission could make its recommendations.

On March 20, 1965, the JCS, arguing that the war was being lost, recommended to McNamara that two divisions of U.S. combat troops and one from South Korea be sent to Vietnam for offensive operations: ". . . the requirement is not simply to withstand the Viet Cong . . . but to gain effective operational superiority and assume the offensive. To turn the tide of the war requires an objective of destroying the Viet Cong, not merely to keep pace with them, or slow down their rate of advance." [117]

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[114] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 406, MACV to CINCPAC, 170747Z, March 1965.

[115] *Ibid.*, CINCPAC to JCS 192207Z, March 1965 and JCSM-216-65, March 25, 1965.

[116] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 3003, Mar. 18, 1965. (There is a typed copy of this cable in the Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, which is erroneously dated March 16.) See also *The Vantage Point*, p. 139.

On March 27, General Westmoreland, in a lengthy analysis which he said was being prepared "before making what may prove to be in the light of history a momentous recommendation [the use of large-scale U.S. ground forces]," predicted that ROLLING THUNDER would not produce adequate results in the next six months, and said that the U.S. had three choices: [118]

> 1. Accelerate the build-up of RVNAF [Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces], commit the 7th Fleet to quarantine the coast against infiltration of men and arms, and continue U.S. logistical support as required. No outside combat power other than Naval and Air support would be provided the GVN under this option.
>
> 2. The above plus the commitment of up to two U.S. divisions with their support, either
>
> a. to secure vital U.S. installations and defeat VC efforts to control the Kontum, Pleiku, Binh Dinh region [the highlands] or
>
> b. to secure critical enclaves in coastal regions, or
>
> c. to do a combination of both of the above.
>
> 3. Both of the major choices above plus a [five division] cordon across SVN and the Laotian panhandle manned by up to three U.S. divisions coupled with ARVN, Thai and Laos forces.

Westmoreland recommended the second course of action—two U.S. combat divisions plus the other steps contained in the first course of action. The third course of action, he said, would be the most effective, but the cordon force probably could not be deployed before the end of 1965, which might be too late. Moreover, if ROLLING THUNDER were successful, such a force would not be needed. If bombing failed, he said, a cordon force could be reconsidered.

Westmoreland also recommended that U.S. forces be deployed in the highlands rather than to coastal enclaves. Calling the latter "an inglorious, static use of US forces in an overpopulated area with little chance of direct or immediate impact on the outcome of events," he said that the advantages of the former were that it: [119]

> (1) Deploys strong US force in an area which is important to the VC strategy.
>
> (2) Represents an offensive, active mission that fully justifies the commitment of such a large force.
>
> (3) Puts large share of forces in a favorable highland climatic environment.
>
> (4) Provides for operations in a sparsely populated area that is critical to both the GVN and VC.

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[117] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 468-469, JCSM-204-65, Mar. 20, 1965.

[118] The text of Westmoreland's paper, "Commander's Estimate of the Situation in South Vietnam," Mar. 26, 1965, is in the CMH, Westmoreland Papers, History Backup. On May 8, Westmoreland submitted a concept paper, "Concept for US/Allied Combat Operations in Support of RVNAF," MACV 15182, May 8, 1965, briefly describing the functions, operations, and command structure of these additional U.S. forces which would be deployed to support South Vietnamese forces. Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[119] Commander's Estimate, Annex G. "Detailed Study of Course of Action 2."

> (5) Enables friend to be more easily distinguished from foe throughout most of the area.
>
> (6) Poses less of a problem in acquiring adequate real estate.
>
> (7) Permits better application of US firepower and mobility.

Westmoreland said the following were the basic U.S. military objectives in South Vietnam at that time:

> (1) Improve the security of major air bases upon which both in-country and out of country U.S. jet operations depend; and to secure important coastal port areas from which combat operations inland may be supported.
>
> (2) Augment and reinforce existing force capabilities in order to bring about a substantial and immediate improvement in force ratio to the VC, thus contributing quickly and importantly to the improvement of the overall security situation in SVN.[120]
>
> (3) Frustrate VC plans and operations and to deny critical areas to the VC by:
>
> > (a) Reversing the military trend within I and II Corps [highlands] zones,
> >
> > (b) Maintaining forward momentum in Hop Tac and the Tien Giang areas [III Corps, around Saigon], and
> >
> > (c) Maintaining the *status quo* in the area south of the Mekong River [IV Corps, South of Saigon in the delta region].
>
> (4) Increase the size and effectiveness of the quick reaction reserve for in-country combat operations.
>
> (5) Strengthen the position of the GVN in negotiations should they occur.

The report stressed, however, that political factors were crucial.[121]

> The stability of the GVN is probably the most serious problem facing the U.S. The government has become increasingly feeble over the past year. The RVNAF, which has, up to now, provided the cohesion and continuity, has begun to show evidence of fragmentation and there is no longer an effective chain of command. The Armed Forces are run by committee. The committee itself is an arena for intrigue and personal ambition.

The report then suggested that the influence of U.S. military officers could help to stabilize the government:

> Unless the U.S. can effectively enter the command and control structure of RVNAF through integration or creation of combined staffs and thus exert leadership and moderation, it seems highly likely that additional coups will take place and the completely irresponsible game of musical chairs will continue among and between the highest command and staff positions.

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[120] The Estimate, which discussed at length the question of force ratios, stated (p. 7): "During the guerrilla phase of insurgency . . . force ratios of up to 10 to 1 or even more are thought to be desirable. However, as the insurgency endeavors to escalate and resorts to battalion or multibattalion actions, these ratios can change. For example, three government battalions well supported by air and artillery against one VC battalion is a sufficient margin for victory."

[121] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Preserving "on the side of order" the "delicate balance that exists today between government/military order and disorder," the report added, "is a prime factor bearing on selection of military courses of actions." [122]

The Westmoreland Estimate also considered "enemy capabilities" at length, and concluded that if U.S. forces were deployed to the highlands and the Communists continued to pursue their strategy of cutting off a part of the central section of South Vietnam, this would be ". . . frustrated by the U.S. division's position in their rear and astride one of their major infiltration routes. This division, equipped with the most modern equipment technology offers, could fight the VC not in the jungle on his terms but from the air and with firepower and maneuver made possible by the best available mobility and communications means." [123]

After U.S. forces were deployed, the Estimate said, the Communists would probably react slowly: "The VC will probably take time to study their opponent and decide upon courses of action." This would be followed by probes of U.S. defensive positions, and this might lead to or coincide with incidents to draw U.S. forces into ambushes. But, the report added, "Not to be overlooked is the possibility that the enemy will choose not to engage US Forces," and might launch large-scale attacks elsewhere.

In a cable to Washington on March 27, Ambassador Taylor again responded to the question of U.S. troop deployment.[124] He agreed that there was a shortage of South Vietnamese forces, and said that the question was whether to accept this or to bring in additional forces from the outside. Before deciding, he said, it was necessary to decide what kind of strategy to pursue during 1965. Strategy A would be to accept the situation and hope that ROLLING THUNDER would provide some relief. Strategy B would be to try to reverse the situation in certain key provinces, which, together with ROLLING THUNDER, might cause the North Vietnamese "to mend their ways." Strategy C would be to ". . . go for broke to win rapidly . . . [by] the injection of all possible military strength into SVN which can be supported and used effectively."

With respect to U.S. forces—and he said that it would take at least 9-12 combat battalions to have a "significant effect on the military situation . . . in the short term"—they could be used in one of three ways: (1) in a defensive or offensive enclave, (2) in territorial clear-and-hold operations, or (3) as mobile reaction reserves, a "striking force in reserve," to assist South Vietnamese forces to "finish" the enemy once "fixed." As he had said in his earlier cable, the passive, defensive enclave would have little effect on the war. Offensive enclaves would be more productive, but would produce higher losses. Territorial clear-and-hold could be effective, but, according to Taylor, "it runs into all of the long-standing objections to the use of U.S. forces in anti-guerrilla operations in SE Asia":

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[122] *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[123] *Ibid.*, p. 20.
[124] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 3120, Mar. 27, 1965.

> Our forces would inevitably suffer serious losses and at the outset would probably not do too well in operations in strange terrain for which they have not been specifically and intensively trained. There would be the inevitable problems of the identification of the enemy and of command relations with the ARVN and with the pacification representatives of the GVN ministries. There would be many legal questions raised relating to detention and arrest of Vietnamese citizens and to use and damage of Vietnamese property. There would be the difficulty of acquiring intelligence in a country where both the language and the environment are unfamiliar. Our forces would be operating under conditions in which the avoidance of ambush has never been solved by GVN forces operating for years in this environment; hence we would have to assume that the newly arrived US forces would have even greater difficulties in finding and fixing the enemy and in protecting themselves against surprise.

Taylor suggested that the most effective plan might be to put U.S. forces in enclaves from which they would operate offensively in a mobile Reserve capacity, and he suggested that this might be tried with the Marines at Danang, followed by two Army brigades operating in a similar fashion in the highlands. This, he said, could be an initial test of the offensive enclave-mobile Reserve plan, as well as a test of "the political and psychological effect of U.S. combat participation on the GVN, on the armed forces of Vietnam and on the people."

Increased air warfare against North Vietnam was also under consideration during the latter part of March 1965. The U.S. Air Force wanted to stage a massive four-week bombing campaign to destroy all of the 94 principal targets in North Vietnam on the list developed in 1964 as a part of OPLAN 37-64, concluding with the bombing of Hanoi.[125] Instead, the JCS proposed to McNamara on March 27 a new 12-week airstrike program (first proposed on February 11 as an eight-week program), based on the OPLAN concept of progressive bombing northward from the southern part of North Vietnam.[126]

The 12-week plan was prepared after McNamara had been briefed on the proposal, and it was drafted, the JCS memorandum stated, in accordance with McNamara's instructions that it should "avoid heavily populated areas and avoid direct attacks against the DRV-based air capability [MiG fighters]." In making the proposal, the Chiefs stated that they had not endorsed actions beyond the first of four suggested phases: Phase I, attacks on lines of communications south of the 20th parallel (the southern part of North Vietnam, where U.S. attacks had been made during March); Phase II, attacks north of the 20th parallel to complete "primary interdiction" of lines of communication in the delta region of North Vietnam; Phase III, attacks on North Vietnamese ports and the mining of approaches "to block the enemy from relieving his resupply problems over the sea LOCs"; Phase IV, attacks on targets throughout North Vietnam and attacks on industrial targets outside of population areas "leading up to a situation where the enemy must realize that the Hanoi and Haiphong areas will be the next logical targets in our continued air campaign."

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[125] "General John P. McConnell . . . and other senior airmen felt strongly that the initial conception of ROLLING THUNDER was too restrictive. They agreed that the LOCs [lines of communication] below the 19th parallel were important parts of the North Vietnamese logistical network, but the vital elements of the system were North Vietnam's ports, railroads, marshalling yards, bridges, and supply centers; there were relatively few of these in the southern part of North Vietnam. Furthermore, as supplies funneled southward, it became increasingly difficult to destroy them in large quantities because of the supplies among hundreds of jungle trails and thousands of porters guaranteed that air attacks in the south would be less efficient than attacks against the Kep Marshalling Yard, the Paul Doumer Bridge, or the ports at Haiphong. Thus senior airmen pressed for the expansion of ROLLING THUNDER into an air strategy focused upon the heart of North Vietnam." Gen. William W. Momyer (USAF, Ret.), *Airpower in Three Wars* (Dept. of Air Force, 1978).

[126] The text of the Mar. 27, 1965 JCS proposal, JCSM-221-65, "Air Strike Program Against North Vietnam," is in the Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

The JCS 12-week proposal, like the JCS 8-week proposal in February, was not approved. According to the *Pentagon Papers,*[127]

> . . . neither the Secretary of Defense nor the President was willing to approve a multi-week program in advance. They clearly preferred to retain continued personal control over attack concepts and individual target selection. Consequently, although the Joint Chiefs strongly urged that "the field commander be able to detect and exploit targets of opportunity. . . ," action in the air war against the DRV continued to be directed at the highest level and communicated through weekly guidance provided by the Secretary of Defense's ROLLING THUNDER planning messages.

For their part, most civilian advisers also seemed to be convinced that the situation in Vietnam required both a stronger military and a stronger political response from the United States. Although the situation had changed very little during March,[128] the general assessment was that the Communists were continuing to gain, and that the South Vietnamese would be unable, without greater U.S. assistance, to cope with the growing threat.

On March 17, a joint CIA, DIA (Defense), INR (State) intelligence memorandum reported that there were 137,000 Communist troops in South Vietnam—37,000 regulars and 100,000 irregulars—an increase of 33 percent over 1964.[129]

On March 21, apparently for a Presidential speech which he had been asked to write, McGeorge Bundy prepared by hand an outline of U.S. interests in Vietnam,[130] in which he concluded that the primary U.S. interest was political, and that the "cardinal" goal was "*Not* to be a Paper Tiger. Not to have it thought that when we commit ourselves we really mean no major risk. This means, essentially, a willingness to fight China *if* necessary. But if it is *not* necessary, the minus far outweighs the plus on any China war. Moreover it is *not* clear that even a *Chinese* war would help us *win* in Vietnam (although it *would* punish the aggressor)." "The conclusion I draw from this," he said, "is that it is to our advantage to frame our posture toward our military program so that we have a *right* to go *anywhere* (and will if sufficiently provoked)—but so that we *also* focus attention where it belongs: on the South. . . . For if we visibly *do enough* in the South (whatever that may be), any failure will be, in that sense, beyond our control." (emphases in original)

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[127] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 344.

[128] U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Central File, Weekly Report on "The Situation in South Vietnam," Mar. 24, 1965, OCI No. 0612/65.

[129] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 406.

[130] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy. In a memorandum to Rusk on Mar. 26, 1965, "Draft Statement on Vietnam," Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Bundy outlined the speech which he was preparing, on which he said he was "working because I have been told to."

Bundy posed this question: "In terms of U.S. politics which is better: to 'lose' now or to 'lose' after committing 100,000 men? Tentative answer: the latter."

In a draft on March 24, 1965 of a memorandum to McNamara, (a revision of his draft of March 10)[131] McNaughton concluded that the U.S. had to act, and that large numbers of combat forces would probably be needed:[132]

> *Assessment and prognosis.* The situation in Vietnam is bad and deteriorating. Even with great, imaginative efforts on the civilian as well as military sides inside South Vietnam, the decline probably will not "bottom out" unless major actions are taken.
>
> *The "trilemma."* US policy appears to be drifting. This is because, while there is near-consensus that efforts inside SVN will probably fail to prevent collapse, all 3 of the possible remedial courses of action have been rejected for one reason or another: (a) will-breaking strikes on DRV; (b) large troop deployments; (c) exit by negotiations.

McNaughton proposed a plan under which the U.S. would seek to initiate diplomatic talks while continuing to apply military pressure on the Communists and to strengthen the situation inside South Vietnam. "Progress inside South Vietnam is our main aim," he said. "Great, imaginative efforts on the civilian political as well as military side must be made, bearing in mind that progress depends as much on GVN efforts and luck as on added US efforts."

In addition to continuing the bombing of North Vietnam, he proposed that the U.S. should prepare to deploy larger numbers of combat forces, beginning with one Army division and possibly one Korean division to Pleiku and the remainder of the Marine Expeditionary Force to Danang (two battalions were already there). Alternatively, one U.S. and one Korean division could be deployed to hold the enclaves (Bien Hoa, Nhu Trang, Qui Nhon, Pleiku), or 3-5 U.S. divisions, plus some forces from other countries to make it an "international" effort, could be deployed across Laos-South Vietnam infiltration routes, as General Johnson had recommended, and in key South Vietnamese cities.

Meanwhile, the U.S. would seek to hold talks, first with the Russians, and, if this were successful, with all interested nations.

If the U.S.S.R. would not "play" this "game," the U.S. should then be prepared to step up the bombing, deploy more of its forces, and reconsider its "minimally acceptable outcome."

"Can the situation inside SVN be bottomed out," McNaughton asked, "(a) without extreme measures against the DRV and/or (b) without deployment of large numbers of US (and other) combat troops inside SVN? The answer is perhaps, but probably no."

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[131] See p. 157 above. In addition to the contents of the March 24 memorandum which are discussed here, other portions of McNaughton's March 10 memorandum, such as the percentage listing of "US aims," were included in the March 24 memorandum.

[132] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam. The text is also in *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 694-702.

Although the principal emphasis of U.S. policymakers in late March-early April 1965 was on preventing further Communist gains, it was recognized by most policymakers that unless the Communists simply faded away, the outcome of the war would be a negotiated settlement rather than a defeat of the enemy in the traditional sense. Thus, the U.S. and South Vietnam were faced with the need to plan for a settlement even while escalating the war. Indeed, because escalation could increase antiwar sentiments, the greater the escalation, the greater the need to convince U.S. and world opinion that the United States was fully prepared to consider a negotiated settlement. The dilemma, of course, was that this could be taken by the Communists as a sign of weakness, as well as alarming those South Vietnamese who supported the war and did not want the U.S. to withdraw until a satisfactory solution had been obtained. In the United States as well, the knowledge that the government was considering a settlement might help to assuage those who opposed the war, but it would also arouse opposition among those who favored a strong military posture in Vietnam.[133]

Thoughts About a Possible Negotiated Settlement

In mid-March, as noted, the subject of planning for negotiations, which had been discussed at various times in the past, was broached in a memorandum from McGeorge Bundy to the President [134] in which he said that, having successfully begun sustained reprisal "without yielding to clamor for 'negotiations,'" it might be useful to issue a public statement about U.S. conditions for peace, as well as for the U.S. Government to consider terms for a settlement. He went on to say, however, that, ". . . the basic conditions of any political negotiation is that it should allow us to continue to take actions which will in fact improve the anti-Communist position in South Vietnam." (This, it should be noted, was a position which, depending on how it was construed, could have seriously restricted or limited the consideration of terms for a settlement, especially when coupled with Bundy's recommendation, with which he concluded the memorandum, that deployment of additional U.S. ground forces could improve the bargaining position.)

It was in this context that William Bundy set out, in a memorandum to Rusk on March 19, 1965, to explore "Possible Sequence of Actions Toward a Settlement in South Vietnam." [135] "Although we cannot see very far down the road on this [moving toward a settlement] at the present time, we obviously need," he said, "to get our thoughts in order and to consider whether we should, in some subtle way, revise or amplify our present formula that Hanoi must simply cease its aggression."

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[133] When Richard Goodwin, the Presidential assistant who prepared the major speech which President Johnson gave at the Johns Hopkins University on Apr. 7, 1965, ". . . slipped 'negotiations'" into the speech, "he found himself assaulted in a White House corridor shortly afterward by Abe Fortas and accused of softness." Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, p. 611.

This is the portion of the Johns Hopkins speech in which the word "negotiation" appears: "We will never be second in the search for such a [peaceful] settlement in Vietnam. There may be many ways to this kind of peace: in discussion on negotiation with the governments concerned; in large groups or in small areas; in the reaffirmation of old agreements or their strengthening with new ones." *Public Papers of the Presidents*, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, p. 396.

[134] See p. 167 above.

[135] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 70 D 207.

The U.S. objective, the memorandum stated, ". . . remains to remove all DRV interference in the south, so that SVN can determine its own future and so that its security will be assured. Since we cannot readily expect Hanoi simply to call the whole thing off at once, we should be thinking in terms of a sequence that would accomplish our objective but still leave them some 'face' at each stage and that will be plausible to the world and consistent with the stated basis of our action, against aggression from the north." "Such a graduated sequence," he added, "also conforms to the practical way the cards might play."

The immediate problem, Bundy said, was to determine the preconditions for a cessation of U.S. bombing of North Vietnam.

> We believe that we must include a cessation of infiltration, at least to the point where we are satisfied that it has stopped or dwindled to a trickle, but that we cannot stop there. Whereas we might have thought nine months ago that, without further infiltration, the VC could be fairly readily handled over a period of time, VC strength is now such that, from a military standpoint alone, they might still be in a position to make dangerous gains.
>
> Thus, we would have to insist, both for practical reasons and in logic, on a second condition concerning the degree of VC continued action in the south. Alex Johnson [with whom Bundy had talked several days earlier], thought that we should insist that Hanoi direct the complete cessation of *all* VC activity. However, most of us think this is too much to expect, and that it would suffice to insist on a cessation of organized unit action of any significant size. (emphasis in original)
>
> These two preconditions would in effect thus be reduced to practical and recognizable terms. We would not be insisting that adequate supervising machinery be in place on the infiltration issue—this would require major deployments by some international grouping, and simply could not be arranged readily. We would not be insisting on a complete "ceasefire." We would be establishing a practical and indeed somewhat elastic standard and saying in effect: "We will know if you go on with the infiltration and we will know if there are significant VC actions. If either of these happens, we are reserving the right to resume our attacks on any scale required."
>
> The result could well be a sort of twilight zone period in which we might in fact be continuing occasional attacks, but in which the situation might be settling down at least to the point where more formal discussions could be held.

The next phase, William Bundy said, would be to determine the future political structure of South Vietnam after all "external interference" had been removed. "Once that interference is gone, we for our part would be prepared to withdraw our forces." When "external influence" had ceased, the sequence of events might be:

> 1. A consolidation of government control in all areas even more or less now under government control, but leaving the VC unmolested in their areas.

2. A regroupment or amnesty progressively applied to the VC areas, under international supervision.
3. International supervision of infiltration routes.
4. Withdrawal of US organized combat units.
5. Some procedure for "determining the will" of the people of South Vietnam. This again would appear to require international supervision, and might conceivably be done on the basis of layers of local elections (as in Pakistan), leading to a national convention.

"In general," William Bundy said, "we should recognize that the presence of additional US organized combat units could become a valuable negotiating card either in this [withdrawal following establishment of international supervision] or some other way, and that such forces would in any event greatly help to stabilize the situation that might exist after the preconditions were satisfied but while major VC units were still in place within SVN." [136]

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[136] On Mar. 26, 1965, the State Department Legal Adviser's Office (referred to as L) also sent Rusk a memorandum on the question of a negotiated settlement: "L's Views on a Negotiated Settlement for Vietnam," Mar. 26, 1965, with attached "Outline of Issues and Alternatives Involved in a Southeast Asian Conference," U.S. Department of State, Lot File 70 D 207. Prepared by Carl Salans, the staff lawyer assigned to work with Bundy's office, (and one of those in the State Department who was concerned about military escalation), it proposed that a settlement be negotiated at a conference of the parties directly concerned, preferably limited to the U.S., the U.S.S.R., China, North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Britain and France. The memorandum added that "it may be necessary" to include the "VC/National Liberation Front" in the conference. Otherwise, they could take the position that they were not bound by agreements made by North Vietnam.

The U.N. should not have a direct role in the conference "on the assumption that it would be unacceptable to the Chinese and North Vietnamese."

The precondition of the conference would be the indication by North Vietnam "that it is prepared to leave its neighbor alone." The U.S. "might insist on a cessation of infiltration into South Vietnam by the DRV as a condition of a conference." Once the U.S. determined that infiltration had stopped, it would cease bombing the North and the conference would begin.

The memorandum noted that other preconditions for the conference had been suggested, including the end of all large-scale Communist attacks in the South [by William Bundy] or the end of all hostilities in the South [by U. Alexis Johnson], but, "This does not seem realistic to us as a negotiating tactic. It would require public capitulation by the DRV/VC to U.S. demands, which is unlikely. It is also more difficult to tie to *North Vietnamese* aggression, which is the legitimate basis of our complaint." (emphasis in original)

At the conference, Salans said, the first item would be a cease-fire, to be enforced by an international commission. This would provide for withdrawal of all foreign troops, for neutrality for all of Vietnam, for consultation between the North and the South on the question of trade and other relationships as well as reunification. The agreement would also ratify South Vietnamese internal political arrangements, which would be negotiated directly between the Government of South Vietnam and the "VC/Front." "These arrangements," he said, "would probably have to include provision for the National Front to function as a legitimate political party and for the eventual formation of a National coalition government (non-Communist/Front)," elected within a specified period of time. Such arrangements would have to deal with the fact that the Communists controlled "much of the Vietnamese countryside," and, therefore, "it may be necessary to allocate certain provincial and district administrative positions and responsibility to the VC/Front," as well as providing for "some degree of military integration of VC forces into the national armed forces."

Salans' memorandum proposed that the task of international supervision be given to one country, preferably Pakistan, or, alternatively, Mexico, Tunisia, Morocco, Ethiopia, or Ireland. "We would not accept another ICC" (the International Control Commission, established to supervise the 1954 Geneva Accords, which was composed of a Communist country—Poland, a non-Communist country—Canada, and a neutral—India). If it were necessary to have a multilateral commission, this could consist of the countries listed for the role of single supervisor, or it could consist of all countries.

The U.S., the memorandum concluded, would remain free, under international law, "to take further collective defense actions against North Vietnam in the event of renewed aggression in violation of the agreement."

As part of the settlement, the U.S. could also consider developing the Mekong River basin, establishing of an Asian Development Bank, and creating a "Marshall Plan" for Southeast Asia.

When he sent Salans' memorandum to Rusk, Leonard Meeker, the Legal Adviser, said in his cover memorandum (drafted by Salans): "It might be desirable in the coming weeks for the

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On April 1, 1965, at the request of Taylor, who was in Washington for consultations, U. Alexis Johnson responded to William Bundy's suggestions for a negotiated settlement.[137] He said that he found Bundy's memorandum "confusing, in places seemingly contradictory, and thus . . . I find it somewhat difficult to come to grips with it." The proposal for determining the "will" of the South Vietnamese through an election, he said, ". . . calls into question the legitimacy and mandate of this or any other GVN which may be in power at time of negotiations. I do not see how any GVN could accept this which is far different from a GVN itself unilaterally making future provisions for a constitutional structure and general elections . . . desirable though general elections may be at some future time, they are no remedy for the ills of SVN which for a long time is going to require a 'strong, effective and stable' government as opposed to some theoretical 'democratic' government." The U.S. position, Johnson said, ". . . should continue to be that the DRV, which directs, controls and supports the VC movement, should get out of SVN in order to leave SVN free to determine its own future in its own way the same as any other country. I emphasize that we should do nothing that calls into question legitimacy of GVN."

U. Alexis Johnson also criticized Bundy's proposal for international supervision of infiltration:

> Based on our past experience, I feel that it is misleading and pursuing a will of the wisp to speak of "reliable" international supervision and inspection of cessation of infiltration. I am also not clear on how it is proposed that this concept be applied to Laos which will remain the principal problem. An attempt to negotiate this with respect to Laos will open up the entire 1962 Laos Accords and in fact I wonder whether we will be able to get anything better on paper than that Accord with respect to Laos. The principal problem of inspection of cessation of infiltration through Laos is not the 1962 agreement but its implementation.

Johnson, noting that Bundy's proposal for ceasing air attacks on the North was based on two "very vague and difficult to establish conditions, first the stopping or dwindling to a trickle of infiltration and [second] the 'cessation of organized unit action of any significant size,'" said that if the U.S. decided that North Vietnam had met the conditions and stopped bombing the North, this would relieve North Vietnam of the pressure to negotiate on behalf of the Communists in the South. The U.S. would then be faced with negotiating directly with the National Liberation Front. Meanwhile, the Communists in the South could be consolidating their position and continuing to attack. "It thus seems to me absolutely essential," Johnson said, "that in some way or other the original negotiations encompass in some form the cessation of VC attacks as well as VC

President, Secretary McNamara and you to explain publicly and in a general way the kind of settlement which the United States would envision for Vietnam. . . . This would have the advantage of stating more specifically than we have in the past the aims toward which our military actions are directed and would shift to the Communists the burden of stating their settlement proposals."

[137] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 3177, Apr. 1, 1965.

regroupment and disposition, that is, a choice between acceptance of an amnesty or repatriation to the DRV."

On April 1, during his trip to Washington, Taylor drafted a statement about the "political track" in reply to William Bundy's memorandum.[138] He proposed that the U.S. would stop bombing the North "in exchange for the termination of aid and direction by Hanoi to the VC (to include the requirement that all Communist radio traffic be in the clear) [a sign of reduced military activity] and for the surfacing, identification, and immobilization of the main VC units in South Vietnam. VC incidents would have to cease and government forces would circulate freely except in the immediate vicinity of the areas occupied by the identified VC units." All of this would be monitored by an international supervisory unit. There would then be a second phase in which all Communist military units would withdraw to the North and U.S. forces would leave South Vietnam.

On April 3, William Bundy sent Taylor a memorandum commenting on Taylor's memorandum and on U. Alexis Johnson's cable, which said, among other things, that he and Taylor were "not really far apart, that our asking price [for ceasing attacks on the North] might include withdrawal of units from the South, but that we might settle for cessation of infiltration (*de facto*) plus a major reduction in VC activity in the South, plus a surfacing and groupment of the major forces in the South, together with a commitment to move rapidly to a stage of withdrawal/demilitarization. If Hanoi did not in fact move to this stage, we would reserve the right to resume attacks on the DRV." [139]

Proposals for Expanding Civilian Programs

Toward the end of March 1965, in addition to proposals for increased military action, there was a spate of proposals for non-military action as each Department and Agency responded to the President's call for increased effort. At the request of the State Department, Taylor submitted on March 22 a list of new and expanded programs. He urged that priority be given to those projects ". . . which bear most directly on our three basic problems: shortage of trained military, paramilitary and police manpower, continued build-up of VC strength, and ineffective government." He warned, however, against "the ever present danger of collapsing the local government by the weight of the programs we pile upon it." [140]

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[138] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 70 D 207.

[139] Same location.

[140] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 3045, Mar. 22, 1965. This was Taylor's list:

"(1) The rehabilitation of existing or the establishment of new facilities in provinces for training of popular forces (PFs). . . . Stepped up training program for PFs by MACV sector advisors, and hoped-for improvements by GVN administration of all aspects PF treatment and operations. . . .

"(2) Provision of dependent housing for PF personnel or selective basis in certain provinces. . . .

"(3) Initiation series of activities all designed to improve and strengthen logistical capabilities for transport, handling, warehousing, and distribution of both civil and military supplies throughout RVN with priority attention being given needs of central provinces in which road and rail transport now almost totally disrupted by VC and refugee population growing daily. . . .

Continued

On March 23, 1965, after receiving Taylor's list, Rusk sent the President a list, developed by Unger, of 41 new, expanded or redesigned non-military activities, saying: ". . . we must seize this present moment of relative government stability, and some renewed spirit resulting from strikes against North Vietnam, to make determined effort to increase our effectiveness and that of the GVN." "Most of what is proposed here," Rusk said, "will not show great results or substantially alter the situation in SVN for some months or longer, even if put into effect immediately. The fundamental requirements for a reduction in the extent of Viet Cong control and the expansion of GVN authority are security in rural areas and better performance by the GVN, which must in the last analysis carry out these programs. These factors can show improvement only slowly as basic deficiencies such as the lack of trained manpower are met." The list, which included some items from Taylor's, was as follows:[141]

A. *Decentralization in the GVN and the Rural Program*

1. Urge the GVN to increase the power and responsibility of the individual province chief. Although the US effort is substantially decentralized, the powers and authority of the GVN province chief remain inadequate. Dependent as he is on Saigon for decisions and funds, his initiative is sapped and needed actions come slowly or not at all. The

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"(4) Expanded support for police build-up and strengthened organization, equipment, and personnel for resources control, particularly in Delta and on waterways that area, main purpose here to harass VC logistics, prevent losses to VC, and protect GVN and GVN-supported civil transport. . . .

"(5) Accelerated effort to follow through on multi-city water treatment and distribution programs. . . .

"(6) U.S. commitment for support of first increment of . . . plan for Saigon/Cholon development . . . [to] provide housing for upwards of 15,000 families with all associated markets, schools, civic buildings, and all public services. . . .

"(7) . . . to support to fullest extent . . . rural electrification program and to add such increments as may prove feasible in extensive rural areas under GVN control.

"(8) Expanded programs in student, sports, and labor fields. . . .

"(9) U.S. Government sponsorship of new industrial enterprises in fertilizer, pulp, paper, and bag productions, and cement. . . .

"(10) . . . [continue] to encourage vigorous civic action programs. . . . Military civic action projects would range from assistance to injured and bereaved persons during operations to the provision of managerial/technical skills for complex self-help or other small developmental projects in secure areas. . . .

"(11) . . . expanded information/psyops [psychological operations] program . . . [to] include:

"1. Increase and revitalization of psychological programs at hamlet level.

"2. Improvement of mass media output, particularly radio.

"3. Installation of TV.

"4. Support for sharply increased GVN international information program.

"5. Further development of youth program, with special emphasis on urban students.

"6. Revitalized 'Chieu Hoi' (returnee) program.

"7. Increased motivational and professional training of GVN personnel in field.

"8. Strengthened media capabilities at provincial level: up to 1,000 more Mopix [motion picture] projectors, greater number of prints and titles; exhibits program at village and hamlet level; increased attention to radio receiver program; funds, personnel training for provincial radio stations and provincial newspapers.

"9. Installation of high-powered radio and transmitter for GVN broadcasts to North Vietnam; development of adequate staff and program capability.

"10. Establishment of secondary-level school for Vietnamese operated on basis of American education principles.

"11. Increased input into Vietnamese educational system at high school and university level, in form of lecturers, teachers, professors, exchanges of students.

"12. Major book program covering textbooks at university level and translations of books of general interest.

"13. Development of survey research capability [public opinion polling] within Vietnam."

[141] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam. In box 198, there is a folder on the "41-Point Program in Non-Military Sphere in SVN" which contains a number of documents relating to the list and its implementation.

Mission already has given great emphasis to this problem but considerable improvement is still required.

2. To mobilize GVN energies and capabilities, and persuade the peasant he has stake in GVN and its success against the Viet Cong, a positive label for the complex of GVN programs, like the "War on Poverty" [a label applied by the Johnson administration to domestic U.S. programs], is required. With this positive label a more dynamic and progressive philosophy should be injected into GVN programs, with emphasis on what is to be accomplished, as opposed to the present static and defensive line. The GVN could achieve this by adopting the New Rural Life Hamlet Program (a new name may be required) as the central program and gearing all US and GVN civil and military effort to it. Such an approach is essential to achieve total commitment of the population.

B. *Youth, Religion and Other Special Groups*

3. Provide expanded support to the GVN Ministry of Youth and Sports and provincial governments in development and implementation of youth programs, such as the recent successful student participation in refugee relief, which will develop a sense of patriotism and responsibility in Vietnamese youth.

4. To make maximum use of available manpower resources and deny rural youth to VC recruiters, reduce the draft age from the present 20 years to 18 or 17.

5. Urge the GVN and religious leaders to revitalize the non-governmental inter-religious council. Support such a council with US funds and material.

6. Persuade the GVN, offering US help as required, to follow through on the steps begun by General Khanh to meet Montagnard grievances.

7. Expand our aid to the anti-Communist labor movement, and urge the AFL-CIO to proceed with direct advice and aid.

C. *Economic and Social Measures*

8. To compensate for the disrupted north-south road and rail lines the U.S. should support establishment of an adequate coastal water transportation system by providing vessels and other assistance. Also with US help the GVN should strengthen its capabilities for the movement of civil and military supplies throughout Vietnam. Other free world countries should be urged to assist in this effort.

9. Urge the GVN to promulgate and as soon as possible begin implementation of an effective and equitable land reform.

10. Support GVN requests to free world countries, particularly those who hesitate to assist Vietnam for political reasons, to provide humanitarian assistance; for example: aid to refugees or help to establish provincial hospitals (to include construction, initial staffing and training of Vietnamese).

11. Construct a teaching hospital in Saigon identified with the US, but affiliated with the University of Saigon

medical school to train Vietnamese doctors and nurses and provide medical care.

12. Send to Vietnam experts, American and possibly Chinese, to assist the GVN in combatting the growing Viet Cong capability for extracting financial and material support from GVN resources and for assuming a controlling position over certain sectors of the SVN economy.

13. Promote an expansion of Peace Corps/Operation Brotherhood-type operations in the countryside using, for example, Filipino and Chinat [Chinese Nationalist] personnel.[142] These personnel, like those of the IVS [International Voluntary Services],[143] have a proven capacity to work effectively with the villager. Such operations will also expand Free World aid.

14. Expand and accelerate, with direct US support, current plans for slum clearance, low-cost housing, and improved water supply in restive urban areas.

15. Accelerate survey of rural electrification needs so that, if found feasible, the program can be instituted without delay in areas under GVN control.

16. In addition to the foregoing economic measures the US and GVN should jointly undertake formulation of a long-range economic and industrial development program for SVN. This program, which should be adaptable to a possible Southeast Asian regional plan, should take account inter alia of the Mekong Committee's plans and the ECAFE [the U.N. Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East] highways proposals.[144]

D. *Education*

17. Increase US input into the Vietnamese educational system at high school and university level in the form of lecturers, teachers, professors, and through exchanges of students.

18. Institute a program to provide textbooks at university level and translations of books of general interest.

19. Establish a secondary level school for Vietnamese operated on the basis of American principles to meet the great desire of many Vietnamese to give their children an "American education" and as a symbol of our determination to stay in Vietnam.

E. *Security and Intelligence*

20. As a first step in the effort to improve prisoner treatment and to facilitate the collection of intelligence, urge GVN promulgation of effective arrest and detention law which will allow civil and military authorities to arrest

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[142] Operation Brotherhood was a civic action program in South Vietnam in the mid-1950s directed by the CIA and staffed by Filipinos, based on a similar program which the CIA had conducted in the Philippines in the late 1940s. See Edward G. Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972).

[143] International Voluntary Services was a non-profit organization through which young people volunteered for two years of service in a less-developed county, assisting with economic development, education, health, etc.

[144] The Mekong Committee was a planning group in the executive branch which was considering the development of the Mekong River basin.

and detain Viet Cong and VC suspects for as long as necessary.

21. Greatly increased intelligence funds should be provided to province and district chiefs on a regular basis to secure information on which local VC infrastructure can be identified.

22. Institute and publicize a program of prompt and substantial rewards (up to average lifetime income) for information leading to the capture or death of VC leaders.

23. In expanding the Vietnamese police from 33,000 to 53,000, intensify the training of police in population and resources control techniques. Reorganize and retrain the Special Branch in informant intelligence operations, and provide support necessary for the performance of these functions.

24. Create a national counterespionage organization to improve the security of GVN information and operations.

F. *Psychological Operations*

25. Numerous valuable proposals in the psychological warfare and public information fields have been put forward by Director Rowan of the USIA in his report to the President. The following suggestions are additional to both of those:[145]

(a) Support Prime Minister Quat's proposed Press Center to enable the GVN to give daily briefings on GVN economic and military activities and social programs.

(b) Study the utility and feasibility of knocking out VC broadcasting facilities.

(c) Encourage visits of government leaders to provinces to explain and publicize government programs.

(d) Encourage the GVN to provide psychological operations teams to accompany ARVN units on all operations. These teams would seek to present the military forces as the people's army and their friend and protector and to improve troop-community relations. This would also help to get government propaganda into insecure areas.

(e) Prepare on an urgent basis a Buddhist film which would present leading Vietnamese Buddhists and the Dalai Lama and portray the fate of the Buddhist religion in a Communist-controlled state.

(f) Develop increased survey-research capability [public opinion polls] within Viet-Nam.

G. *GVN Personnel and Administrative Measures*

26. Urge GVN to unify all systems of recruiting and training local officials (cadre) for the rural program. Urge future recruitment of cadre from amongst inhabitants of surrounding area, based on ability. Greatly increase current pay scale and provide other incentives.

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[145] The Rowan (USIA) report on new and improved actions which USIA proposed to undertake was made after the trip which Rowan made to Vietnam on March 3, as a member of General Johnson's party. There is a copy in the Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

27. To encourage achievement, urge the GVN to establish a comprehensive program of rewards (financial and citations) for outstanding performance in the war effort by civilians and government officials. This program should be given widespread publicity in SVN.

28. Double or triple the pay of hamlet and village school teachers and urge GVN to move as rapidly as possible to establish primary school facilities for all children in secure areas.

29. Double or triple pay for province and district officals and village chiefs and assure that they are covered by adequate and effective insurance benefits.

30. Undertake economic support of measures to increase the effectiveness of Popular Forces, including rehabilitation or construction of training facilities and provision of dependent housing on a selective basis in certain provinces.

31. Establish a special US purchase fund for distribution to province chiefs to meet emergency needs not covered by authorized funds.

32. Promote expanded contacts and exchanges of views between provincial authorities and the central government in Saigon along the lines of the recent successful conference convened by Prime Minister Quat.

H. *Refugees and Emergency Situations*

33. Provide whatever US support is required beyond that already being extended to assure an effective GVN program to care for refugees: provide adequate housing, food, employment, indoctrination and resettlement, where feasible.

34. Organize US/GVN quick-fix fire brigade team or teams to provide for rapid survey and immediate action on crash problems such as refugees, towns hit by aircraft, and areas devastated by the VC. Team to be backed up by full US/GVN resources without necessity for recourse to normal channels.

I. *Administrative Measures to Increase US Effectiveness*

35. Assign hand-picked US officers to work directly, continuously and exclusively with each special interest group. Such groups to include the Buddhists, Catholics, sects, Montagnards, students and labor. Ideally, these should be provided from within Mission resources.

36. Assign hand-picked US officers to work directly and exclusively with GVN in the Prime Minister's office, key ministries such as Interior, Information, and Chieu Hoi, and on key programs such as land reform and the New Rural Life Hamlet. Ideally, these should be provided from within Mission resources. Their presence in the GVN Ministries should prove valuable, inter alia, in bringing US and GVN concepts closer together.

37. To provide common guidance and fuller US coordination of pacification operations, the establishment of a US interagency action group for pacification directed by a

> senior Mission officer who reports directly to the Ambassador should be studied.
>
> 38. Hardnosed review of housekeeping and reporting requirements on US personnel, so that their time can be freed to the utmost for operations and for work with the GVN.
>
> 39. Construct a new American Embassy building in Saigon as a symbol of our determination to stay in Vietnam for the long haul. (It is also sorely needed—present space and security is inadequate.)
>
> 40. To attract and hold best US personnel for service in Viet-Nam, increase allowances, provide better leave arrangements for time with family, authorize accelerated promotions and give top level recognition and support to statement that the way to get ahead is service in Viet-Nam. This requires legislation.
>
> 41. Increase the numbers of International Volunteer Service personnel or provide other US personnel to work with the Vietnamese in a Peace Corps-type role.[146]

On March 24, 1965, McGeorge Bundy sent the President a summary of the proposed 41 non-military actions, and in an accompanying memorandum he said:[147]

> My personal view is that with truly executive leadership and a strong effort throughout the country team, we really could make substantial progress over a 12-month period. I also believe that our current policies can win us that much time, if they are skillfully and carefully applied. The one thing we have never had out there is a fully coordinated U.S. effort under the leadership of an Ambassador who understood the essentially political nature of the problem and applied himself to decentralized action with U.S. advice, assistance, and support at every level.
>
> I have thought about practically nothing except the name you mentioned to me this afternoon,[148] and I have a feeling that if this war could be given an operational Chief of Staff like John McNaughton (whom he is said to like and respect very highly), with Alexis Johnson as his political deputy, we might just have the right team. If McNaughton went in this capacity, moreover, we might easily convert Bob McNamara [to a more political view of the problem].

For its part, the CIA, which *did* view the problem as primarily political, in mid-March, 1965 sent to the White House a proposal for a broad program of pacification based on self-defense and political, social and economic development at the local level.[149] This was

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[146] On Mar. 27, 1965, Taylor sent a two-part cable, Saigon to Washington 3114, commenting on the 41 points. U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S.

[147] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

[148] The name in question may have been John J. McCloy, a noted New York lawyer with long government experience, one of the 16 "Wise Men" (described in greater detail on p. 347 below). When McCloy was asked by the President to become U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, he declined the post. CRS Interview with John J. McCloy, Sept. 30, 1980.

[149] A memorandum from the CIA, which it had submitted to Chester Cooper at his request, was sent to McGeorge Bundy by Cooper on Mar. 19, 1965 with a recommendation that the proposed nine-point program be approved. These documents, which are located in the Johnson Li-

Continued

followed by a request from the President to CIA Director McCone on March 26 for specific recommendations of actions which the CIA could take, and on March 31 McCone responded with a 12-point list which was designed, he said, "to improve the viability of the government, to promote cohesion within the South Vietnamese military structure, and to encourage South Vietnamese people to support their government and to participate more actively in the defense of their country." [150] On April 1, as will be seen, the Presi-

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brary, NSF Country File, Vietnam, are still classified. In February 1988, the CIA rejected a request from the author that these documents be declassified.

Although there is very little available information on the CIA proposal, it was described in an attachment prepared by the CIA ("Tab A: Discussion") to Rusk's memorandum to the President on Mar. 23, 1965, cited above, on the 41 non-military actions:

"There is proposed a further focusing of the American effort away from the national and to the provincial level, involving full acceptance of the concept of a larger share of US advisory and logistical support going directly to the Province Chief. This would require a redefinition of the role of the Province Chief with respect to military authorities in his area and to Ministries in Saigon. It would involve varying techniques of approach to problems in different parts of Viet-Nam. It would place in the hands of the Province Chief authority and resources for the conduct of a program of total mobilization of the civilian population as part-time auxiliaries to normal civilian security and welfare services. The single most important factor in the conduct of the anti-communist struggle in Vietnam is the historical preference of the Vietnamese peasant for any feasible alternative to communist control. In many areas of the country, there is no feasible alternative because the peasants are defenseless in the face of even small armed Viet Cong groups. The emphasis in this program would be the *achievement* of pacification, rather than the provision of pacification. Every person, male or female, between the ages of 15 and 55, other than those currently serving in the army or Regional or Popular Forces, would be required to participate. The objectives of the activity would be:

"a. First-line protection of hamlets and villages from small-scale VC harassment, terrorism, tax collection, foraging, and armed induction into VC ranks: The Quang Ngai Special Platoons [platoons composed of local citizens who were trained at a CIA-operated facility—see below] graphically demonstrate what can be accomplished in this area.

"b. Education of the civilian population with respect to government programs and policies with emphasis on securing total civilian participation therein;

"c. Representation of the needs and aspirations of the local population to the central government particularly with respect to security, health, education, agricultural improvement, vocational training, cultural advancement, and entertainment;

"d. Provision of intelligence on the village and hamlet level concerning VC programs, personalities, and resources;

"e. Cooperation with regular ARVN forces as well as Regional and Popular Forces in the conduct of operations by serving as guides, spotters, and porters.

"All participants would receive simple paramilitary training in the use and care of weapons. Weapons would be under the control of the District or Village Chiefs who would provide them to local residents only when they were actually on duty. Residents would be required to spend so many days or nights per week or month on guard duty, ambushes, in health education, agricultural instruction and vocational training, or, if qualified, serving in schools and dispensaries. When under attack, all trained residents would fight, the living taking up weapons from the dead and wounded and using such other simple weapons as would be available, including spikes, spears, swords, and bows and arrows—whatever is at hand. When no fighting occurs, that portion of the population on duty would be engaged in projects of value to the community including sanitation, irrigation, construction and operation of information halls, schools and dispensaries, etc."

[150] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, McCone memorandum to the President, Mar. 31, 1965, with attached memorandum to McCone from Richard Helms, Deputy Director for Plans, "CIA Proposals for Limited Covert Civilian Political Action in Vietnam." Of the twelve points in Helm's memorandum, only these four were not excised completely by the CIA when the memorandum was released in 1985:

" 7. *Expansion of current political action and similar teams working in disputed areas.* (approximately three lines excised)

" 8. *Organization, training and supply of Montagnard development communities and self-defense units in a highly flexible manner.* (approximately five lines excised)

" 9. *Provide flexible assistance,* (one-half line excision) *to local partisan groups indicating a will to defend their communities against the Viet Cong.* In addition to the Montagnards, there are large numbers of ethnic Vietnamese who, given arms, organization, training and support, can and will defend their home areas against small-scale Communist foraging, tax collection, conscription and political indoctrination.

"10. *Expansion of guerrilla and harassment teams working in Viet Cong areas.* Small, well-trained and armed teams penetrate Viet Cong redoubts, heighten peasant dissatisfaction with Viet Cong controls and harass the Viet Cong." (the remainder of #10, approximately two lines, excised) dent approved further study of the CIA plan, and subsequently he authorized its implementation. Apparently, however, he did not agree to as broad a mandate for the Agency as it was seeking, but there is little available information as to what he did approve.

An earlier version of the CIA's pacification plan, initiated by the Agency in 1961 when Colby was Station Chief in Saigon, had involved the creation by the CIA, using U.S. Army Special Forces as staff, of the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) among the mountain tribes (Montagnards) in the highlands of South Vietnam.[151] Beginning in December 1963, responsibility for the CIDG was gradually transferred from the CIA to the Army, and the mission of the CIDG began to change from one of local defense to one of a military strike force.[152]

In 1964, after it had lost control of the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups, and following the demise of the Strategic Hamlet Plan—a similar effort attempted by the Diem Government in 1962-1963 [153]—the CIA, with leadership from the Station Chief in Saigon, Peer de Silva, and Colby, who was then Chief of the Far East Division of the Directorate of Plans (covert operations), began to support two programs for the training of local self-defense teams.[154] One of these, known as PATs—People's Action Teams—consisted of a small number of young men (about 40 to a team) who, after being trained and armed in a CIA-operated camp at Vung Tau returned to their communities to provide security and to assist citizens with their work. By 1965, there were about 15,000 members of PATs, mainly in the central part of South Vietnam in Quang Ngai Province.

The second training program supported by the CIA, which was quite similar to PATs, was based on the efforts of a former Viet Minh battalion commander in the First Indochina War (1945-1954), Nguyen Be, who in 1965 was the Deputy Province Chief of the central coastal province of Binh Dinh. Be had organized some of the citizens to protect their communities against the Communists and to cooperate in refrigerating fish for shipment to market. His approach, ". . . was the substance of the Communist village program shorn of such aspects as terrorism . . . local youths were trained and indoctrinated in a relatively lengthy course (eventually standardized at thirteen weeks) to do no less than completely reform the hamlets and villages to which they were assigned. They were dressed in black pajamas [traditional rural dress], lived with the villagers, and helped them in their work. . . ." [155]

In mid-1965, after President Johnson approved the CIA's proposal for increased activities, including an expansion of local defense, these two training programs were merged into the PAT program, and the CIA training school at Vung Tau was expanded. According to Colby, 40,000 members of PATs were trained there during the war.[156]

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[151] See William E. Colby, *Honorable Men* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978), pp. 165-169 and Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era*, pp. 106-107.

[152] See Colby, pp. 219, 225-26; Blaufarb, pp. 258-261; and pt. II of this study, p. 23 fn. 63 and pp. 104-105. See also Shelby L. Stanton, *Green Berets at War: U.S. Army Special Forces in Southeast Asia, 1956-1975* (Novato, Cal.: Presidio Press, 1986). By March of 1965, there were about 20,000 CIDG forces, led by 1,500 U.S. Special Forces.

[153] See pt. II of this study, pp. 104-106.

[154] See Peer de Silva, *sub rosa: The CIA and the Uses of Intelligence* (New York: New York Times Books, 1978), p. 20, and Colby, *Honorable Men*, pp. 232-233.

[155] Blaufarb, p. 210.

During 1964-1965 the CIA also initiated a program designed to foment unrest and insecurity in areas of South Vietnam controlled by the Communists by which Counter-Terror Teams (the name was later changed to Provincial Reconnaissance Units) of six or so men would infiltrate into enemy-held territory to kill or capture local Communist leaders (the "VC infrastructure").[157]

Stepping Up the Pace

On March 23, 1965, the President held a Tuesday luncheon meeting with Rusk, McNamara and McGeorge Bundy from 2:43 p.m. to approximately 3:45 p.m., at which Vietnam was the major agenda item. There is no available information on what was discussed except for a few handwritten notes by McGeorge Bundy:[158]

> P. [President] Where are we going?
>
> RSM [McNamara]—our message may be getting thru.
>
> DR [Rusk]—some signs: but no door for them to go thru.
>
> LBJ: Do they know we're willin to talk. You can revisit targets. I dont wanna run out of targets + I dont wanna go to Hanoi. I was a hell of a long time gettin into this. But I like it.

On March 26, the NSC met from 1:25 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.[159] Attending were the President, Rusk, Ball, McNamara, Vance, McGeorge Bundy, William Bundy, McNaughton, General Wheeler, McCone, Richard Helms, Deputy Director for Plans, Dillon and Rowan. After hearing reports on the situation in Vietnam, the President emphasized the need to increase the U.S. effort:

> It is unlikely that present political actions will meet the situation. We should plan for a bigger political effort to reverse the current trend. . . .
>
> An overall policy speech on Vietnam should be prepared. We should enlist new brain power in drafting the things which need to be said. One grows tired of reading only what the other side is saying. We should crank up our propaganda effort. . . .
>
> More time should be spent on new initiatives. Perhaps we should have two [National Security] Councils—one defensive and one offensive.

Rusk commented that members of the Senate "are getting nervous," and "should be briefed as soon as we have something new to say." He said that weekly executive session briefings of appropriate Senate committees should be considered. The President, noting that, "We are spending most of our time defending our actions in Vietnam," said that, "Senators other than those on the Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees should be called on and given briefings. Separate gatherings should be arranged which would be addressed by only Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara. All questions raised at these hearings should be answered. We should then offer to go up to the Hill to testify on Vietnam every two weeks."

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[156] Colby, p. 233. In the fall of 1965, the terminology was changed and PATs became Revolutionary Development Cadre Teams under the Revolutionary Development Program, which was the new term for pacification.

[157] See Blaufarb, pp. 211-212, and Colby, p. 234. This is the program which McNaughton included in his March 2 list of actions which could be taken in South Vietnam, and which William Bundy said would cause "no policy problem."

[158] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy, Luncheons with the President.

[159] Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings, Summary Notes of 550th NSC meeting by Bromley Smith, Mar. 26, 1965.

On March 29, 1965, Taylor, accompanied by General DePuy, Westmoreland's deputy for operations, arrived in Washington for consultations, leaving Saigon just before the Communists bombed the U.S. Embassy, killing two Americans and 15 Vietnamese.[160] That day (March 29), Taylor met with McNamara and the JCS to discuss the Westmoreland-JCS plan for deploying two U.S. divisions and one Korean division. He said that three divisions ". . . seemed high; that Quat was not persuaded that more troops were necessary; that anti-American sentiment lies just below the surface and that finally there were two very real limitations on the number and rate of introduction of US or 3rd country forces. First is the absorptive capacity of the country and second logistical limitations."[161]

McNamara said he favored the proposal for sending these additional forces, "conditioned by: (1) political (psychological) absorption capacity, (2) logistical absorption capacity, (3) operational requirements." He added that the deployment of a Korean division with the U.S. divisions was necessary "for reasons of domestic [U.S.] reaction" to the deployment of additional U.S. forces.

Taylor, McNamara and the JCS agreed that ROLLING THUNDER should be stepped up, and that the question of aerial mining of the port of Haiphong as a more effective, less expensive equivalent of blockade" should be reexamined. "It was thought," the report on the meeting said, "that this action [aerial mining] might become necessary in the period 4 to 12 weeks out ahead."

On March 31, 1965, in preparation for a private meeting that day of the President with Taylor from 5:34 p.m. to 6:25 p.m., McGeorge Bundy sent the President this memorandum:[162]

> 1. Max Taylor's visit this afternoon is the first of two. Today he comes privately. Tomorrow all the recommendations growing out of his visit will be available for formal presentation to you in the presence of the heads of the departments concerned. This will be quite a substantial meeting in numbers, but it is being kept off the record—and if it leaks it will be billed simply as one more effort to make sure that we are doing everything we can to make our program more efficient and effective.
>
> 2. The three problems on Max's mind are these:
>
> (1) The timing and direction of attack on the North
>
> (2) The timing, size, and mission of any U.S. combat deployments to Vietnam; and
>
> (3) The terms and conditions of a political resolution of the problem.

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[160] On March 31, CINCPAC recommended that the U.S. respond to this bombing by launching a "spectacular" reprisal attack on North Vietnam, but this was rejected by the President. *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 279-280.

[161] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Washington to Saigon 2131, Mar. 30, 1965 (Taylor to U. Alexis Johnson).

[162] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President. Apparently no notes were taken at the meeting.

He has done more thinking on (1) and (2) than on (3)—and so have we.

3. I think that on (1) he is in reasonable agreement with our outline plans for the next 2 or 3 weeks. But he is prepared to go toward Hanoi faster than McNamara. You may wish to probe him on this because I sense that you are leaning a little ahead of Bob on this one.

4. On U.S. deployments, I think Taylor and McNamara are very close together in the notion of a coastal deployment of the remaining battalions of the Marine Expeditionary Brigade and the effort to get a Korean Battle Group. (Ambassador [Winthrop G.] Brown [of Laos] warns from Seoul that he is very wary of this proposal and that the ground would have to be very carefully laid).

5. Max's work is still continuing on the proposed actions to beef up our work inside South Vietnam. Max is somewhat resistant to our pressures on this since he feels that his own time and energy should go into the absolutely top priority problems. What he puts at the head of the list is overall troop strength in South Vietnam—and I think he is probably right, at that. But the other matters also count, and that is one more reason for my conviction that in the long pull we need a McNaughton-type in Saigon. John *does* see this point. (emphasis in original)

6. Finally, you and Taylor will certainly wish to talk over the guidelines for his meetings with Congressional Committees tomorrow and any backgrounding he may do with the press.

The next morning (April 1), in preparation for a meeting on that day of the President with Taylor and other advisers, McGeorge Bundy circulated a memorandum on the "key elements" for discussion, based on a draft by William Bundy on March 31, which began with a description of the situation in South Vietnam:[163]

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[163] McGeorge Bundy's April 1 memorandum is in the Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces. William Bundy's draft of March 31 is in U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers).

On March 31, NSC staff member James Thomson sent McGeorge Bundy a memorandum, "Possible Steps Toward a Detente with North Vietnam," (Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam), which he said was a "very preliminary, sketchy, top-of-the-head paper" on thoughts that he and Cooper had after meeting with Bundy on March 30 (there is no available documentation on the March 30 meeting) that they wanted Bundy to have for his meeting at 10:00 a.m. on March 31 (there is no available information on the March 31 meeting). The memorandum discussed possible approaches to North Vietnam by the U.S.: first, another visit to Hanoi by J. Blair Seaborn, the Canadian member of the International Control Commission, and, second, direct U.S. contact with a North Vietnamese official in a third country. Three names were suggested (at this point in the memorandum there are approximately 8 lines excised, presumably the names of those suggested). The message in either case would be:

"(a) Our commitment is absolutely firm to the self-determination of the people of South Vietnam, and we will take all actions necessary to fulfill that commitment.

"(b) We seek no wider war, either for ourselves, or for the suffering people of the two Vietnams.

"(c) We have no intention to overthrow the Hanoi government or to threaten the independence of North Vietnam.

"(d) Our fundamental purpose is to achieve the objectives of the 1954 Geneva Agreements; their achievement should be in the interest of all the Vietnamese people.

"(e) Specifically, we seek to obtain a truly independent and neutral North Vietnam and a truly independent and neutral South Vietnam.

"In this regard, once the North Vietnamese cease their support of the Viet Cong, we are willing to consider proposals for internationally supervised free elections in South Vietnam.

"(f) We are willing to consider any proposals from the DRV to achieve these objectives."

If the North Vietnamese response was "at all favorable," Thomson and Cooper proposed that the U.S. should then seek the following results:

Continued

> Morale has improved in South Vietnam. The government has not really settled down, but seems to be hopeful both in its capacity and in its sense of political forces. The armed forces continue in reasonably good shape, though top leadership is not really effective and the ratio of armed forces to the VC build-up is not good enough.
>
> The situation in many areas of the countryside continues to go in favor of the VC, although there is now a temporary lull. The threat is particularly serious in the central provinces, and the VC forces may be regrouping for major efforts there in the near future.
>
> Hanoi has shown no signs of give, and Peiping has stiffened its position within the last week. We still believe that attacks near Hanoi might substantially raise the odds of Peiping coming in with air. Meanwhile, we expect Hanoi to continue and step up its infiltration both by land through Laos and by sea. There are clear indications of different viewpoints in Hanoi, Peiping, and Moscow (and even in the so-called Liberation Front), and continued sharp friction between Moscow and Peiping. However, neither such frictions nor the pressure of our present slowly ascending pace of air attack on North Vietnam can be expected to produce a real change in Hanoi's position for some time, probably 2-3 months, at best.
>
> A key question for Hanoi is whether they continue to make real headway in the south, or whether the conflict there starts to move against them or at least appear increasingly tough. If the former, even a major step-up in our air attacks would probably not cause them to become much more reasonable; if the latter, the situation might begin to move on a political track—but again in not less than 2-3 months, in our present judgment.

The memorandum stated that there were two proposals for negotiations which required U.S. decisions. One was from U Thant, who had privately suggested to the U.S. that there should be a three-month cessation by both sides of "all hostile military activity, whether overt or covert, across the 17th parallel in Vietnam" (the demarcation line between the South and the North). This proposal, the memorandum stated, should be "turned off," but the U.S. should tell U Thant that it did not object to his talking privately

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"(a) An end to U.S. air-strikes, in exchange for a tacit or announced stand-down by Hanoi 'in the interest of the welfare of all the Vietnamese people.'

"(b) A cease-fire agreement, to be enforced by a strengthened ICC (perhaps expanded in membership).

"(c) Mutual agreement *in principle* to a return to the Geneva Accords of 1954, and

"(d) Mutual agreement *in principle* to the following specifics implied in the Geneva Accords:

"—Phased withdrawal of foreign forces, under supervision of the strengthened ICC, to the levels permitted under the Accords;

"—Free elections to be held in South Vietnam under ICC supervision;

"—A declaration by the Hanoi and Saigon governments of their intent to pursue neutrality in foreign affairs.

"(e) New international guarantees for the independence and neutrality of Laos and Cambodia."

At any point, the memorandum added, these negotiations could be shifted to a multilateral framework, possibly an international conference on Cambodia which Prince Norodom Sihanouk had requested (see p. 235 below) or a new Geneva conference. Also, the U.S. could renew military operations at any time if the North Vietnamese were not complying in good faith.

with North Vietnam about the proposal, and if he got a response the U.S. would consider it.[164]

The other proposal was a "17 nation appeal" of "nonaligned" countries, led by Yugoslavia, in late March 1965,[165] which criticized foreign intervention in Vietnam and called for negotiations without preconditions. This, the memorandum circulated by Bundy said, was "more attractive" than the U Thant proposal, and should be accepted. "Tactically, it will probably not lead to any early conference, because the position of Hanoi and Peking will be that they will not attend any meeting until our bombings stop."

"We have three cards of some value," the memorandum said: "our bombing of North Vietnam, our military presence in South Vietnam, and the political and economic carrots that can be offered to Hanoi. We want to trade these cards for just as much as possible of the following: an end to infiltration of men and supplies, an end of Hanoi's direction, control, and encouragement of the Viet Cong, a removal of cadres under direct Hanoi control, and a dissolution of the organized Viet Cong military and political forces." "We do not need to decide today just how we wish to mesh our high cards against Communist concessions. But we will need to be in such a position soon, if only to exchange views with Quat."

McGeorge Bundy's memorandum then discussed political and military actions which should be taken by the U.S.:

(1) Deployment of two additional Marine battalions and one Marine Air Squadron and associated headquarters support elements.

(2) ". . . [A]n 18,000-20,000 man increase in US military support forces to fill out existing units and supply needed logistic personnel."

(3) Gradual intensification of ROLLING THUNDER, "stepping up attacks on lines of communication in the near future, and possibly moving in a few weeks, to attacks on the rail lines north and northeast of Hanoi." "Blockade or aerial mining of North Vietnamese ports needs further study and should be considered for future operations. It would have major political complications, especially in relation to the Soviets and certain third countries, but also offers many advantages."

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[164] On Mar. 29, 1965, U Thant discussed the cease-fire proposal—which he said he would not make if the U.S. objected—with Ambassador Stevenson. Johnson Library, NSF Agency File, Representative of the U.S. to the U.N., Stevenson memorandum to Rusk, Mar. 31, 1965. Although the relevant documents are not available, apparently the U.S. response was not encouraging, and U Thant deferred making the proposal. On Apr. 29, 1965, Stevenson sent a memorandum to President Johnson (same location) stating that although U Thant, in deference to the U.S., had delayed taking action on a cease-fire, he might not continue to do so. In the memorandum, Stevenson analyzed the pros and cons of U Thant's proposal, and concluded by suggesting that while the U.S. had the force necessary to wage a military conflict in Vietnam and to "contain" the Chinese Communists, in the long-run there was the question of Asian support for U.S. policy (he spoke of the need to create an "Asian consensus and eventually an Asian coalition for the containment of China"), as well as whether the American people would support a war without the help of Asian countries. There was also, he said, the need "to reverse as quickly as we can, without other major drawbacks, a situation which tends willy-nilly to drive the Soviets into following a common policy with the Chinese. . . ."

[165] *New York Times,* Apr. 2, 1965. The 17 countries were: Afghanistan, Algeria, Cyprus, Ceylon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea, India, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, Yugoslavia, Zambia, Uganda.

(4) "Air operation in Laos, particularly route blocking operations in the Panhandle area, should be stepped up to the maximum remunerative rate."

(5) Various programs of other U.S. Government agencies, including the 41-point program of non-military activities developed by Taylor and the State Department, recommendations from USIA, and the 12-point program from the CIA.

With respect to additional troop deployments, of which the troops referred to in (1) above would be the first installment, the memorandum stated: "In view of the inadequate ratio of government forces to the likely pace of VC buildup during 1965, consideration has been given to (and the JCS would recommend) the addition of 2 or 3 division forces to take on limited missions, to release government forces for wider use, and to deter large scale DRV attacks on South Vietnam." This would be done in a series of steps beginning with the additional Marine battalions and logistical forces [(1) and (2) above]. The memorandum added: "Because the reaction of the GVN and the South Vietnamese people to any major US combat deployment is uncertain, as is the likely net effectiveness of US and third country combat forces in the Vietnamese environment, the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense recommend that action at this time be limited to approval of the first step," (i.e., the forces in (1) and (2) above). "The second and remaining steps could be reviewed approximately 60 days from now." Because of the need to prepare for larger forces, however, detailed plans should be made for the logistics required for their support.[166]

On April 1 the President met from 5:33 p.m. to 6:43 p.m. and again from 7:00 p.m. to 7:40 p.m. with Taylor, Rusk, McNamara, Vance, McCone, McGeorge Bundy, William Bundy, McNaughton, and General Wheeler. According to brief handwritten notes of the meeting by McGeorge Bundy,[167] "Rusk spelled out *his* view—which is 4 forms of Northern withdrawal: (1) end of infil men (2) end of infil supplies (3) end of control (4) withdrawal of troops put in from North." Taylor, Rusk said, needed to discuss with Quat the question of possible negotiations. The question, he added, was "How to make pressure without reaching flash point."

The President commented that there was "no harm in 3 power talks but great harm if they tell anyone they are acting for us." McGeorge Bundy responded: "We may find it hard to get, so how hard do we get tied on to it?" The President replied: "We can't but we must ask for it."

Rusk said he was "not sure that Hanoi can deliver on cessation." McCone said he agreed, but added that, "a substantial reduction is possible."

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[166] A memorandum from McCone on April 2, cited below, referred to and quoted from the "paper that we discussed in yesterday's meeting." The quoted language, however, is not from the memorandum circulated by McGeorge Bundy on April 1. It is identical to language in NSAM 328 (cited below), which was issued on April 6. It would appear, therefore, that the paper in question, which was used at the meeting on April 1, was a draft of NSAM 328 based on the April 1 memorandum circulated by McGeorge Bundy.

[167] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy, handwritten notes of meeting of Apr. 1, 1965. These apparently are the only notes of that meeting.

The President then remarked: "If we can first get our feet on their neck." He said he was *"full of determination."* (emphasis in original) "We have set our hand to wheel." He added:

> payin enough money—payin enough information. we got to find em and kill em.

General Wheeler said that the JCS did not agree with the proposal to send only 18,000-20,000 logistical troops and three additional Marine battalions. "We are losing the war out there," he said. "The JCS wants one Marine division, one Army division, one ROK [Republic of Korea] division."

The President asked Wheeler, "Have we exhausted all the possibilities with foreign forces?" Wheeler replied that there would be 10 Korean battalions, one Australian battalion and a Filipino regimental combat team. There would be no combat troops from these other countries, however, unless the U.S. sent more combat troops.

Wheeler said that the JCS wanted a tentative decision to send the three divisions (two U.S., one Korean). It would not be necessary in that case, he added, to call up the Reserves.

According to McGeorge Bundy's notes, the response was:

> McNamara—no decision today
> Rusk—no decision today
> *they* [the two divisions] *should be ready*

On April 2, the NSC met from 2:05 p.m. to 3:05 p.m. Present were: the President, Taylor, Rusk, McNamara, Vance, McCone, McGeorge Bundy, William Bundy, McNaughton, General Wheeler, Secretary of the Treasury Henry H. Fowler, USIA Director Rowan, AID Deputy Director William S. Gaud, and from the White House and NSC staffs, Reedy, Moyers, Valenti, and Cooper.[168]

Rusk briefed the Council on diplomatic and political aspects of the situation, including the 17-nation appeal. "He recommended that our reply [to the 17 nations] be serious, restrained and positive. If the other side makes a shrill and unyielding response we will achieve a major propaganda advantage; if they react in a positive way, we will get some clues as to what they may have in mind with respect to possible negotiations." [169]

Toward the end of the meeting, CIA Director McCone "expressed the view of CIA analysts that the Communist position was hardening," and that the U.S. should take this into account in future policy decisions, especially in connection with sending additional troops to Vietnam." In a memorandum that day (April 2), McCone explained his position.[170] He said that the provision in the paper approved by the President on April 1 for continuing the "present slowly ascending tempo of ROLLING THUNDER" and for selecting targets that were outside the "GCI [Ground-Controlled Interception—radar] range of MIGs," ". . . will not be persuasive to the NVN and would probably be read as evidence of a U.S. desire to temporize." Such a program, he said, would also produce increasing pressure from elements of the American public, the press, the U.N. and world opinion, to stop the bombing, and the result would be that "time will run against us in this operation and I think the North Vietnamese are counting on this."

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[168] Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings File, Summary of 551st NSC Meeting, April 2, 1965 by Chester Cooper.

[169] On April 8, the State Department replied to the 17-nation appeal, saying that the U.S. agreed with the principles noted in the appeal and was attempting to support them in Vietnam. The cause of the conflict, the statement said, was North Vietnamese aggression, and peace would come when aggression ended. The U.S., however, was prepared (as the Johns Hopkins speech had stated) for "unconditional discussions." *Department of State Bulletin*, April 26, 1965.

The Communists generally ignored or rejected the 17-nation appeal. According to a CIA summary, "The Situation in South Vietnam (8 April-14 April 1965)," OCI No. 0615/65, (Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam,) ". . . Communist China, North Vietnam, and the Liberation Front have rejected the appeal out of hand. China was reportedly very cool to the nation who delivered the proposal and on April 4, North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong dismissed the appeal as 'inoperative' in a conversation with the French representative in Hanoi. The Front representative in Prague said the proposal was unacceptable because it did not denounce 'US aggression' or demand an immediate cessation of US attacks against North Vietnam. To date, Moscow's treatment has been confined to a 1 April *TASS* item merely noting that Soviet Premier Kosygin had received the appeal."

Moreover, he said, the 12-week bombing plan of the JCS, proposed on March 27, 1965, was not "sufficiently severe or damaging to the North Vietnamese to cause them to compromise their present policy."

The decision to use the Marines in combat, McCone said, would probably be of limited effect against the guerrillas, and therefore would lead to an "ever-increasing commitment of U.S. personnel without materially improving the chances of victory." "In effect we will find ourselves mired down in combat in the jungle in a military effort we cannot win, and from which we will have great difficulty extracting ourselves."

McCone said he supported the President's decision to use U.S. forces in combat, but that this decision would be ". . . correct only if our air strikes against the North are sufficiently heavy and damaging really to hurt the North Vietnamese." "Instead of avoiding the MIGs, we must go in and take them out. A bridge here and there will not do the job. We must strike their air fields, their petroleum resources, power stations and their military compounds. . . . If we are unwilling to take this kind of a decision now, we must not take the actions concerning the mission of our ground forces. . . ."

The next day (April 3), as Taylor was preparing to leave for Vietnam, Rusk held a meeting with Taylor at the State Department, attended also by McGeorge Bundy, William Bundy, Unger, and Harvey F. Matthews, Jr., to review what Taylor would discuss with the South Vietnamese, and to agree on the final wording of the NSAM which was to be issued (on April 6) on the President's decisions of April 1.[171] Rusk began by saying that he thought Taylor ". . . would now have an impression of the problem facing the political leadership in the United States on policy toward Vietnam." "The President," Rusk said, "felt that he must not force the pace too fast or the Congress and public opinion, which had been held in line up to now through the President's strenuous efforts, would no longer support our actions in Vietnam." Rusk said he hoped, therefore, that Taylor would "not be too specific in relating the Washington decisions to Premier Quat and that he would inform the Vietnamese of specific events, such as the 21-point [General] Johnson program, only just before they were about to take place." He said that Taylor could mention to Quat that the U.S. was planning to send additional troops (combat troops consisting of two Marine battalions and a Marine air squadron, and 18,000–20,000 logistical forces to prepare for future deployment of U.S. forces) but that because the President "has not yet cleared the idea of further offensive enclaves," Taylor's discussion of the new troops should be "ambiguous," and should emphasize the logistical rather than the combat troops. "Secretary Rusk also emphasized that in discussing with Premier Quat the logistic development of certain coastal enclaves [using the new 18,000–20,000 logistical forces], this should be treated in very low key and stated in very general terms with nothing that would lead the Vietnamese to begin to think in terms of the deployment of U.S. divisions.[172] He agreed with Ambassador Taylor's suggestion that we could discuss with the Vietnamese the actions we considered necessary in terms of normal repairs and improvements for current operations and to meet possible contingency needs." [173]

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[170] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Memorandum, April 2, 1965, from McCone to Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy and Taylor.

[171] This "Memorandum for the Record" of the meeting in Secretary Rusk's office at 10:30 a.m., Apr. 3, 1965, with attached one-page list of "Subjects for Discussion with GVN," and another one-page "Memorandum for the Record" on the April 3 meeting, drafted by Unger is located in the papers which were declassified by the U.S. Government for use in the 1983 court case brought by General Westmoreland against the Columbia Broadcasting System. These are located in the National Archives (National Records Center), but they have not been organized or processed.

The question of negotiations—the "political track"—was also discussed at the meeting on April 3, and, ". . . it was agreed that it was not yet possible to determine how we would play our high cards in any negotiations and what we hoped to get for each card."

Taylor asked whether the Government of South Vietnam should be the "mouthpiece" in any discussions with North Vietnam, and Rusk replied, "not necessarily except perhaps with the NLF." "In this connection," Rusk added, "we should explore with Quat whether there was any possibility of the GVN's talking to [National Liberation] Front leaders and persuading a couple of them to defect. Such defectors, who would say publicly the whole Front was a fraud and a sham, would be worth a great deal—perhaps several million dollars in Switzerland."

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[172] A joint State-Defense cable to Taylor on April 3 stated: "Pacing of deployments is of critical import as we do not repeat not desire give impression rapid massive build up but intent is to accomplish deployment of Marine forces earliest feasible after Ambassador Taylor secures permission GVN. Desire indicate we continuing on course previously set and gradual build up proceeding according to plan. In keeping this policy deployments, other than Marines, will be spaced over period time with publicity re all deployments kept at lowest key possible." U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Washington to Saigon 2184, April 3, 1965.

[173] This is Bui Diem's account of his experience after Taylor conferred with Quat (*In the Jaws of History,* pp. 135-137):

"During the first week of April Taylor came back to Saigon and presented Quat [on April 4] with a request for 'concurrence' with the National Security Council decision to bring extra support troops and marine reinforcements with expanded duties. At first Quat simply did not know what to make of it. We were completely in the dark about what the Americans intended by bringing in these additional 20,000 support troops and by enlarging the marine detachment and changing its mission—all this only weeks after we were surprised by the initial two-battalion landing. . . . And because we were unaware of the background and interest of this new American plan, we were not able to evaluate it in a meaningful, or even rational, manner.

"We suspected, though, that the Americans were operating from some carefully devised master plan that they had simply chosen not to share with us."

Bui Diem says that he was asked by Quat to assess U.S. intentions, and that he had begun talking to a number of U.S. officials in Saigon, as well as to his closest contacts among U.S. press representatives, but was stopped short when the U.S. told Quat that the request for concurrence was urgent. At a meeting with Taylor on April 6, Quat, Bui Diem says, ". . . felt constrained to agree. . . ."

For Taylor's report on the meeting with Quat on April 6, see Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 3249, Apr. 6, 1965.

After the meeting at the State Department on April 3, a brief memorandum was prepared on the consensus which had developed with respect to certain aspects of U.S. policy.[174]

> (1) The time period of two or three months before we expect to hear noises about negotiations from Hanoi derives from the estimate (of William P. Bundy and others) that it will take that long for us to show clear evidence that we intend and have the means to win in SVN.
>
> (2) Everyone in Washington seems to agree that we must give evidence that we will win in SVN before Hanoi will be willing to talk. Admiral Sharp also believes what we do in SVN is at least as important as what we do in NVN. All concur that the two are interrelated.
>
> (3) The Flash Point, or the point at which the Chinese would decide definitively whether or not to intervene, is generally thought to be our destruction of the MIG's and the airfield at Phuc Yen. The decision makers wish to postpone this point at least three months. William Bundy feels the DRV will not give in till we hurt them close to the Flash Point.
>
> (4) The President and Secretary McNamara feel strongly the need to have third-country combat forces along with any that we may be forced to introduce. There are serious political problems in getting them now from Korea, which is the only place sizeable units could come from. Ambassador Taylor noted there would also be problems politically in SVN in sending them there, as they were not enthusiastic to have them.
>
> (5) Both Secretary Rusk and McGeorge Bundy emphatically said they did not agree it would be difficult for us to resume bombing NVN after we had ceased doing so in the course of playing our cards in negotiations. If Hanoi reneged on its commitments by continuing to infiltrate or dragging its feet in the negotiations, we should have no qualms about resuming our bombing. They said we should not permit our will to be constrained in this matter, and that we should retain the option of unilaterally ceasing to bomb as a possible gambit, with full readiness to resume if it didn't work.

On April 6, 1965, NSAM 328, which promulgated as policy the decisions made by the President at the meeting on April 1, was issued by McGeorge Bundy, as follows:[175]

> 1. Subject to modifications in the light of experience, and to coordination and direction both in Saigon and in Washington, the President approved the 41-point program of non-military actions submitted by Ambassador Taylor in a memorandum dated March 31, 1965.
>
> 2. The President gave general approval to the recommendations submitted by Mr. Rowan in his report dated March 16, with the exception that the President withheld approval of any request for supplemental funds at this time—it is his decision that this program is to be energetically supported by all agencies and departments and by the reprogramming of available funds as necessary within USIA.

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[174] CMH, "General Points of Interest from Ambassador's Consultation in Washington."

[175] Johnson Library, NSF National Security Action Memorandums.

3. The President approved the urgent exploration of the 12 suggestions for covert and other actions submitted by the Director of Central Intelligence under date of March 31.

4. The President repeated his earlier approval of the 21 point program of military actions submitted by General Harold K. Johnson under date of March 14 and re-emphasized his desire that aircraft and helicopter reinforcements under this program be accelerated.

5. The President approved an 18- 20,000 man increase in U.S. military support forces to fill out existing units and supply needed logistic personnel.

6. The President approved the deployment of two additional Marine Battalions and one Marine Air Squadron and associated headquarters and support elements.

7. The President approved a change of mission for all Marine Battalions deployed to Vietnam to permit their more active use under conditions to be established and approved by the Secretary of Defense in consultation with the Secretary of State.[176]

8. The President approved the urgent exploration, with the Korean, Australian, and New Zealand Governments, of the possibility of rapid deployment of significant combat elements from their armed forces in parallel with the additional Marine deployment approved in paragraph 6.

9. Subject to continuing review, the President approved the following general framework of continuing action against North Vietnam and Laos:

We should continue roughly the present slowly ascending tempo of ROLLING THUNDER operations, being prepared to add strikes in response to a higher rate of VC operations, or conceivably to slow the pace in the unlikely event VC slacked off sharply for what appeared to be more than a temporary operational lull.

The target systems should continue to avoid the effective GCI [radar] range of MiGs. We should continue to vary the types of targets, stepping up attacks on lines of communication in the near future, and possibly moving in a few weeks to attacks on the rail lines north and northeast of Hanoi.

Leaflet operations should be expanded to obtain maximum practicable psychological effect on the North Vietnamese population.

Blockade or aerial mining of North Vietnamese ports need further study and should be considered for future operations. It would have major political complications, especially in relation to the Soviets and other third countries, but also offers many advantages.

Air operation in Laos, particularly route blocking operations in the Panhandle area, should be stepped up to the maximum remunerative rate.

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[176] Under this change of mission, as subsequently agreed to by Rusk and McNamara, Marines were permitted to expand their combat role in three stages: first, to engage in patrols within 10 miles of their bases, then within 30 miles, and then, beginning on about June 1, 1965, within 50 miles.

10. Ambassador Taylor will promptly seek the reactions of the South Vietnamese Government to appropriate sections of this program and their approval as necessary, and in the event of disapproval or difficulty at that end, these decisions will be appropriately reconsidered. In any event, no action into Vietnam under paragraphs 6 and 7 above should take place without GVN approval or further Presidential authorization.

11. The President desires that with respect to the actions in paragraphs 5 through 7, premature publicity be avoided by all possible precautions. The actions themselves should be taken as rapidly as practicable, but in ways that should minimize any appearance of sudden changes in policy, and official statements on these troop movements will be made only with the direct approval of the Secretary of Defense, in consultation with the Secretary of State. The President's desire is that these movements and changes should be understood as being gradual and wholly consistent with existing policy.

Concern in Congress

During the period in late March-early April 1965, as President Johnson and his associates were deciding to increase the U.S. role in Vietnam, there were various expressions of interest and concern in Congress. On March 23, the President held his regular meeting with Democratic congressional leaders, and apparently Vietnam was one of the subjects of discussion. There are no notes on the meeting, but the next day Mansfield again wrote to the President:[177]

> Over the years, I have submitted both to your predecessor and to you a series of memorandums on the situation in Viet Nam and Southeast Asia. Sometimes suggestions have been requested of me and sometimes they have been volunteered. In either case, they have been motivated solely by a desire to give such help as I might in the burdens of the decisions of the Presidency.
>
> The main lines of thought in these memorandums over the years, as you may recall, are the following:
>
> 1. That the United States does not have interests on the Southeast Asian mainland to justify the costs in American lives and resources which would be required if we were to attempt to exercise, in effect, primacy over what transpires in that region; and that, insofar as South Viet Nam is concerned, we are there, not to take primary responsibility, but to provide whatever assistance is wanted and can be used effectively by the Vietnamese themselves.
>
> 2. That our national interest lies in reducing, rather than in increasing, the unilateral role which we have played in recent years, through the foreign aid program and excessive involvement of various United States agencies in the internal affairs of the weak nations of that region

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[177] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

3. That our national security interests are best served in Southeast Asia by severely limiting our military involvement and, confining ourselves at most, to a very judicious use of air and sea power.

4. That the best prospects for a tolerable long-range situation in Southeast Asia lie in encouraging, through astute diplomacy and limited and preferably multilateral economic assistance, the emergence of truly independent governments with firm roots in their own people, which are as free as possible from great power involvement in their internal affairs. This situation, as I have noted, time and again, has prevailed in Cambodia at least until very recently when, in my judgment, a combination of years of inept diplomacy and the events in Viet Nam finally conspired to push this small and ably-led nation sharply towards China. It has prevailed to some extent in Burma and at one time, there was hope for it in South Viet Nam under the late Ngo Dinh Diem.

I am aware that the principles of policy outlined in the four points above are subject to the charge of "a return to isolationism." It should be noted, however, that there is no automatic virtue in an ubiquitous and indiscriminate internationalism, particularly when it leads to the kind of isolated internationalism in which we presently find ourselves in Viet Nam.

I think it is correct to say that the trend of our policies over the past few years has been in a direction opposite to the main lines of thought which are contained in my memorandums over the past few years. I say this, as you know, without rancor or criticism. I know that my thoughts have received your careful attention. I know that your assistants and the bureaucracy have studied them and occasionally even have concurred in an idea expressed in them.

Nevertheless, it is still a fact that present policy is on a course which contains the following diametric opposites of the suggestions which I have advanced over the years. Present policy, so far as I can determine, requires:

(1) That we make whatever expenditure of American lives and resources, on an ascending scale, as necessary in order for us to exercise, in effect, a primacy over what transpires in South Viet Nam. If this involves going into North Viet Nam and beyond, that, too, will be done.

(2) That in the absence of unconditional capitulation of the Viet Cong, our military involvement must continue and be increased as necessary (there is discussion even now of a Joint Command which can only be the prelude to United States command in fact if not in word).

(3) That our military involvement will not be restricted to a most judicious use of air and sea power, as evidenced by instructions to strike at "targets of convenience," but rather that it be extended, even to the infusion of a steadily increasing number of American combat forces on the ground.

(4) That we will not try to encourage, through sustained diplomatic efforts, the emergence of the kind of situations

> which exist in Burma and Cambodia, but rather, so far as I can see, that we will stress those situations which can be maintained only by continuous infusions of American aid (i.e., Laos and Thailand, not to speak of South Viet Nam itself).
>
> Those are the facts of our policy as it is being carried out. . . .
>
> In the end, I fear that this course, at best, will win us only more widespread difficulties which will play havoc with the domestic program of the Administration, with the balance of payments situation, and with our interests and constructive influence elsewhere in the world.

These were Mansfield's suggestions:

> I have no great hope that, at this late date, these suggestions will be useful to you. But for what they may be worth, I would suggest:
>
> 1. That we should concentrate any ground forces which are sent to Viet Nam to safeguard Americans already there in two or three key spots which either back up on the sea or are easily accessible from the sea (i.e., Saigon and Da Nang) and that all other Americans in Viet Nam should be drawn into these protected points as rapidly as possible. From the point of view of our diplomatic position, two or three accessible and more defensible bases will be of greater value than numerous installations in the interior which can become, one by one, the targets of massed Viet Cong attacks;
> 2. That we should seek, indirectly but forcefully, through all possible sources, a reconvening of the 1961 Geneva Conference group;
> 3. That we should insist upon, as the sole precondition for such a meeting, a total cease-fire and stand-fast throughout all of Viet Nam, north and south;
> 4. That we should be prepared for consultations between the Saigon government, the North Vietnamese and the opposition in the south on the conditions for maintaining the "cease-fire" and "stand-fast," and on subsequent relationships once a conference has been convened and, further, that we accept, if circumstances indicate the desirability of it, United Nations participation in this connection.
>
> As you well know, it is very difficult to predict the evolution of a course of policy once it has been set in motion. There will be risks to our national interests in a conference, but certainly, in my opinion, risks which are far smaller than those which we now run. I think it should be pointed out that if there is a settlement it is possible that Chinese influence in Southeast Asia may increase, but that possibility is even greater if the present course is pursued further. A settlement would not necessarily mean, however, that China will automatically control the area in a military or even an economic sense. The historic counterforce to that domination is the general Southeast Asian fear and anxiety of the Chinese which is quite distinct and may be at least as strong as ideology. In present circumstances, this fear and anxiety would appear to be largely dormant but

> it could revive in the event of a Chinese attempt at subversion or subjugation, particularly after a settlement. The existing Sino-Soviet dispute is also likely to distract China from Southeast Asia to some degree, but *not* in the event of a deepening military confrontation in that area. (emphasis in original)
>
> I have written frankly and at length out of a deep concern over the present trend of events in Viet Nam. We are in very deep already and in most unfavorable circumstances. In my judgment we were in too deep long before you assumed office. But you know the whole situation on a day-to-day basis and I most certainly respect the decisions which you have felt compelled to make in this connection.

Mansfield concluded:

> I shall not trouble you further with memorandums on this situation and I do not expect an answer to this letter. Your responsibilities are great and, to what I have written, I know you must add the views of many others who see this situation in different terms. But I did want to put certain possibilities before you in the event you have not yet had an opportunity to explore them. And I want you to know that you have my support on a personal as well as an official basis. If there is anything I can do to help you in this as in any other matter you have only to ask and I will try to the best of my ability to do so.

The President did not reply to Mansfield's March 24 letter or the earlier memorandum of March 18 until April 12, after his April 7 speech at Johns Hopkins University. In his April 12 letter, in which he said he thought there was "more agreement than difference between us," Johnson commented on several points which he thought Mansfield had overstated, but he did not discuss Mansfield's principal substantive arguments.[178]

On March 26, Senator McGovern, at his own request, met with the President from 6:10 p.m. to 6:37 p.m. to talk about Vietnam. He had prepared a brief memorandum on his views, and when he referred to it during their conversation, Johnson retorted, according to McGovern, "'Don't give me another goddamn history lesson. I've got a drawerful of memos from Mansfield. I don't need a lecture on where we went wrong. I've got to deal with where we are now.'"

"Driving out the White House gate that night," McGovern said, "I literally trembled for the future of the nation." [179]

During the latter part of March 1965 other interested Members of Congress proposed action by Congress to support the President's position and to clarify and confirm U.S. policy. One of these was Republican Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, later the Senate Republican leader, who said in a speech in the Senate that Congress should "demonstrate confidence in our President and give him the tallest posture we can." Scott added: "We cannot withdraw from Vietnam. If we do, we will be forced to defend countries closer to our own soil and security. We must not fight in Bangkok; not in

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[178] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

[179] George S. McGovern, *Grassroots* (New York: Random House, 1977), pp. 104-105. For the text of McGovern's memorandum see Johnson Library, White House Aides Files, Office Files of Horace Busby.

Tokyo, Calcutta, or Manila. We must be ready to fight in Vietnam and show the world the strength of our conviction and the resoluteness of our purpose."

Scott introduced this resolution:[180]

> That the Congress approves and supports the President's actions to strengthen the Nation's policy to deter and defeat aggressors who seek to destroy the political independence of South Vietnam.
>
> It is the sense of the Congress that it is in the best national interest to assist in defending the people of South Vietnam against the aggression of the Communist regime of North Vietnam; to secure the freedoms of speech and religion for the people of South Vietnam; to bring about tranquility and security in South Vietnam with a cessation of hostilities and a restoration of peace through honorable negotiations at a time of our choosing.

On March 25, Senator Jacob Javits offered a similar resolution, cosponsored by Senator Daniel K. Inouye (D/Hawaii), but with more emphasis on negotiations. (Javits' wording at the end of his resolution was "that the United States is ready, wherever there is any willingness by the other appropriate parties to do so, to undertake honorable negotiations to attain these objectives.") One purpose of the resolution, he said, was to show U.S. willingness to negotiate. He also took the position, however, that the U.S. could not withdraw: "We can only honorably perform our commitments, unless the ground is washed out from under us and it becomes absolutely clear that there is no will to resist in Vietnam."

Besides emphasizing negotiations, the purpose of the resolution, Javits said, was to help establish a stronger public consensus behind U.S. policy toward Vietnam. Javits warned of the "danger caused by an erosion of support among the American people themselves for the effort in South Vietnam," which he said was reflected by congressional mail. His own mail, he added, "has been running in some weeks as high as 50 to 1 against our Vietnam operation. . . ." He again urged the President to explain U.S. goals and negotiating principles to the public, as well as to explain the reasons for believing that the South Vietnamese themselves were determined to resist the Communists and wanted U.S. help. "If we are running great risks—and they are great indeed," Javits said, "the least we can do is solidify the support of our own people, and of the people of the world, by outlining limited objectives and sticking to them. . . ."[181]

Senator John Sherman Cooper (R/Ky.) had reached similar conclusions, and following Javits' remarks Cooper gave a speech in which he urged the President to make it clear that the U.S. was willing to negotiate. He also urged the President to say that these would be "true negotiations," in order to avoid what Cooper thought was an unrealistic condition being prescribed by the U.S., namely, that negotiations could not take place "until the intervention and aggression of North Vietnam ceases." According to Cooper, it was "unlikely that the Communists will agree to this condition for negotiations, as we will not agree to their condition that the United States withdraw. It is a kind of demand from both sides for unconditional surrender." He added that although there was no indication the Communists were willing to negotiate, "it is the tradition of the United States, and one consonant with our system of government, that we take every reasonable step to reach a peaceful settlement without resort to war."

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[180] *CR,* vol. 111, p. 5480. No action was taken on the resolution. As is customary, the Foreign Relations Committee sent a copy of the resolution to the Department of State for its comments, and the reply on May 6, 1965 was that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution "contains a complete declaration of support within a broad context for the President's policy in Vietnam," and that another resolution was not necessary. U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S.

[181] No action was taken on the resolution. The State Department advised in a letter on May 6, 1965 that, as in the case of the Scott resolution, this was not necessary. U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S.

Cooper also urged the Senate leadership to arrange for Vietnam briefings for Senators who were not on the Armed Services or Foreign Relations Committees. Reflecting the growing concern among many Senators about Senate inactivity, especially on the part of the Foreign Relations Committee, he also urged the committee "to devote its time and its knowledge to continued discussions of this problem, to ascertain if, as a committee, it can make helpful, constructive suggestions to the executive branch and to give greater advice to the Senate." [182]

On March 30, the chief of staff of the Foreign Relations Committee, Carl Marcy, sent a memorandum to Chairman Fulbright expressing concern about the situation and suggesting that the committee should become more active:[183]

> Your staff (Pat [Holt], Don [Henderson], and I) are much worried at the role of the Committee on U.S. policy in Vietnam. The United States is on the verge of decisions there that can be the most important of the decade, if not of this half century. Yet at this moment the Committee is discussing foreign aid once again. If the President wanted a free hand he couldn't have planned a better way to keep the Committee occupied.
>
> In our judgment a clear majority of the Committee (nine according to my count) [at that time there were 19 Senators on the Committee] agree with the Lippmann column of this morning and with the [Hans J.] Morgenthau article in the *New Republic.*[184] At least four other members probably agree. I sus-

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[182] For the speeches of Javits and Cooper see *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 5931-5937.

[183] National Archives, RG 46, Marcy Chron File.

[184] The column by Walter Lippmann "On the Way to the Brink," appeared in the *Washington Post*, Mar. 30, 1965. The article by Hans Morgenthau, "War With China," was in the *New Republic*, Apr. 3, 1965. Lippmann's major point was that it would be a mistake for the U.S. to become further involved in the war in Vietnam, and that, contrary to claims that it was a test of the future of wars of liberation, the war was a "revolutionary upheaval" in which the U.S. had become entangled, "and we shall not make things any better by thrashing around with ascending violence." He said that bombing had not changed the course of the war and that there was increasing pressure on the President to send U.S. ground forces. The current estimate, he added, called for 350,000 troops. "But if we had an American army of 350,000 men in South Vietnam, and extended the war in the air, we would have on our hands an interminable war without the prospect of a solution. To talk about freedom and national independence amidst such violence and chaos would be to talk nonsense."

Morgenthau's major point was that it would be a mistake to attempt to seek to "contain China" through the defense of "accidentally selected local outposts at the periphery," like Vietnam, and that such a policy "leads with logical necessity to war with China." Noting that the President and others had denounced critics of the war, he said that the President should welcome such criticism, and should not seek a short-term consensus at the expense of the long-term public good.

pect that if the issue were drawn and there were a vote on sending an additional 300,000 men to Vietnam as McNamara hinted last week, the Committee would be even more numerous in opposition. Yet everyone is silent. They are silent despite the fact that you (with tacit Committee approval) asked Secretary Rusk that the Committee be informed of any plans to escalate in Vietnam.

The appearance of Ambassador Taylor later this week (or some executive session) may offer some opportunities. What would you think of alternatives along the following lines:

(1) A committee request for the unvarnished facts—facts not embroidered with charts and high powered salesmen. Two techniques are possible:

(a) A request that two staff members be given access to relevant intelligence data including CIA National Intelligence Estimates and special estimates over the last twelve months, and report privately to the Committee the results of this examination.

(b) Creation of a subcommittee of two or three members for the same purpose.

(2) A request that you and two or three other Members call privately on the President (without the Bundys present) to express your disquiet.

(3) A resolution or a private letter from the Committee (or a majority thereof) asking in unequivocal terms that the number of U.S. military personnel not be increased above 50,000 without specific Congressional authorization, since the commitment of so many men would be tantamount to a declaration of war.

There is no indication that Fulbright acted on these suggestions, although, as will be seen, he and others did ask some very pointed questions at the executive session with Taylor on April 2.

Meanwhile, it appears that Fulbright had already begun to seek to influence the President. Toward the end of March he talked at length with Senator Richard Russell, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Johnson's closest confidant in the Senate. Fulbright told Russell that the situation in Vietnam was "pretty damn dismal," and that some honorable way should be found to end U.S. involvement. Russell said he had opposed U.S. intervention but that once the U.S. was committed it had to honor its commitment and use the necessary force to achieve its objective. Fulbright argued that the U.S. would be at a great disadvantage in a guerrilla war, and that pressures on North Vietnam could lead to war with China or a confrontation with Russia.[185]

During this same period (end of March), Fulbright was asked by Johnson to come by the White House, where the two talked ". . . alone and at length. This time, Johnson listened closely. Fulbright left feeling he was getting through." With the assistance of Seth Tillman, a member of the staff of the Foreign Relations Committee, he drafted a memorandum to the President (dated April 2, 1965) which he then discussed with McNamara for two hours one

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[185] Tristram Coffin, *Senator Fulbright, Portrait of a Public Philosopher* (New York: Dutton, 1966), pp. 241-242.

Sunday before giving it to the President.[186] These were its main points:[187]

1. It would be a disaster for the United States to try to engage in a massive ground and air war in Southeast Asia. Not only would it be extremely costly, but it would also revive and intensify the Cold War which had begun to cool off following the missile crisis in Cuba, and it would lead to a revival of jingoism in the United States.

2. The threat to Asia was not Communism, as such, but rather Chinese imperialism.

3. The smaller nations of Asia were historically afraid of and independent of China, and a Communist regime in Vietnam independent of China, as Tito was independent of Russia, would be of greater value to world security than weak anti-Communist regimes dependent primarily on U.S. manpower and money.

4. As a way of finding an end to the war, the United States should declare a moratorium in the bombing, make clear our aims, and begin a campaign to persuade the people of Vietnam, north and south, of the economic and political advantages of a free and independent regime.

5. The United States might make its wishes known through Great Britain or Russia that we would accept an independent regime, regardless of its political makeup, and that we would at the same time join in guarantees of the independence of the country and the rights of minorities, and that the regime not be a pawn or satellite of any great power.

6. It would be of advantage to world stability to have a regime in Vietnam oriented to Russia rather than exclusively to China, since at least at this point China was in an agitated and belligerent and resentful mood.

According to one source, Fulbright gave the memo to Johnson at a White House dinner on April 5. "The President took it without comment. Fulbright never heard of it again." [188]

On the morning of April 2, Ambassador Taylor testified at a joint executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees [189] (as well as at an executive session of the House Foreign Affairs Committee later in the day), the first time since January that there had been a Senate committee hearing at which Vietnam was the major topic. Acting on personal instructions from the President, Taylor said he was generally optimistic about the situation in Vietnam, but he was guarded or nonresponsive in his answers to questions about troop deployment, particularly the decisions made at the NSC meeting on April 1.

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[186] Haynes Johnson and Bernard M. Gwertzman, *Fulbright, the Dissenter* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968), p. 205. According to Anthony Austin, *The President's War* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1971), p. 120, McNamara was "noncommittal."

[187] Johnson and Gwertzman, pp. 205-206.

[188] Austin, p. 120. The White House Daily Diary of the President does not refer to such a dinner on April 5.

For a recent study of Fulbright and the war see William C. Berman, *J. William Fulbright and the Vietnam War: The Dissent of a Political Realist* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State Univ. Press, 1988).

[189] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services, unpublished executive session transcript, Apr. 2, 1965.

Taylor told the Senate committees that the U.S. was not "losing this war, we are just not winning it in terms of recapturing the people." This, he said, was due to what he called the "stagnation of pacification." He was asked a number of questions about troop deployment. He replied: "We are at the point where we certainly have to contemplate increases in U.S. manpower of some sizeable numbers," but he said he would not support the rumored number of 350,000.[190] That figure, he said, "was in the context of a massive attack out of North Vietnam or out of China."

Taylor added that there were also reports of three or four more divisions, but that "no one is approaching a decision of this magnitude at this moment. . . ," and that he could not see the need for that many additional troops. The U.S., he said, was "determined not to lose this thing." There was a manpower problem, he added, but at that time it was not clear how many troops would be needed. "I think there is pretty general agreement we have to put something in to help cover the gap which exists during the rest of the calendar year. Suggestions vary from the one extreme of a number of divisions down to simply reinforcements. . . ."

Taylor was also questioned as to whether Congress would be asked to approve substantial additional troops—the figure 300,000 was used—and he replied, "When that day comes, Senator, you are going to be consulted, I am perfectly sure."

Several Senators said they did not think the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was adequate authority for Presidential action of the magnitude that might be required. Fulbright asked, ". . . is the resolution which we passed last summer after the Tonkin affair, interpreted to mean a full authorization, approval by the Congress to send either 300,000 or 500,000 or a million and a half people to South Vietnam? Is the Administration taking this view and do they interpret that they would not need to come and consult the Congress or the Senate or the Armed Services Committee or this Committee if they are going to decide to put, well, 150,000 men? . . . I think this is a rather important matter if it is that we are going into the land war conditions we ought to be consulted." Taylor again replied, "no one that I know of in Government is talking about the figures you have been talking about," but said he was sure that if such a decision "ever comes around that this Committee would be most thoroughly consulted."

Senator John C. Stennis (D/Miss.) said he thought Fulbright had raised the important question as to whether land forces would be sent into Vietnam under the authority of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution without further congressional approval. If this happened, he said, "We are making a decision here in a way, Congress is, that that is the way it will be, if we don't intervene or assert ourselves."

Fulbright also asked Taylor about the importance of Vietnam for U.S. security, and Taylor replied, "It is simply the fact that Vietnam is a very important element in a very important piece of real estate, namely Southeast Asia, one to which we have committed ourselves publicly. . . ." Fulbright replied, "Maybe we made a mistake in committing ourselves publicly," and Taylor responded, "We would make a bigger mistake if we give up there, Senator."

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[190] The rumor was reported by Walter Lippmann, for one, in his column in the *Washington Post*, Mar. 30, 1965.

Fulbright also asked Taylor what was meant by a "victory" in Vietnam. ". . . [W]hat we want," Taylor replied in part, "is to end up with a South Vietnam that is not threatened by communism and is able to choose its own government, be a respected member of the society of nations."

After the meeting, Fulbright, when asked about the testimony, told the press that the situation in Vietnam was a ". . . very serious, very unhappy situation and all are apprehensive about it." The war, he said, "can always escalate beyond control." [191]

At the NSC meeting that afternoon (April 2), as has been mentioned, Taylor reported on his morning's congressional testimony: [192]

> *Ambassador Taylor,* who had spent the morning on Capitol Hill, indicated that he had no trouble in the House. The mood of some Senators was one of concern, but not disapproval. Senator Fulbright was worried about reports that the U.S. might send as many as 3 or 4 divisions to Vietnam. The Senator also pointed out that the Joint Resolution might not cover the dispatch of large ground units to Vietnam. Senator Church was interested in the nature of our "carrot" and its relationship to negotiations and bombing. In general, there was considerable interest in the "diplomatic track." Secretary Rusk confirmed, on the basis of his recent experience, that there appeared to be general support for our policy, albeit some worry as well.
>
> *The President* indicated that he didn't think the sending of U.S. military forces to Vietnam would require a new Congressional Resolution. He felt that our sending troops to Europe in the early '50s was not a relevant analogy.

That night (April 2), William Bundy talked to Rusk about needing to reassure those Senators who had expressed concern about the possible deployment of 300,000 men under the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Rusk tried unsuccessfully to reach Fulbright and Clifford Case. He told Church, who was the only one he was able to reach, ". . . that no such operation was at all in contemplation and that we would naturally consult with appropriate Senate leaders before we seriously considered such a step." On April 3, Bundy sent a memorandum to the State Department's congressional liaison office suggesting that they follow up by contacting, or having Ball contact, Fulbright and others ". . . to convey an authoritative message to this effect, perhaps referring to the Secretary's personal attention to it." [193]

On April 7, 1965, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a public hearing on the proposed fiscal year 1966 foreign aid authorization bill, with McNamara and Under Secretary of State Ball as witnesses. After the public hearing, the committee continued in executive session and at this point the question of consulting Congress about decisions to increase U.S. forces in Vietnam was again raised by Fulbright and others.[194] Fulbright began by asking, "It seems to me that your basic assumption with regard to the Vietnam policy is that our present policy will continue, that you don't expect to succeed in bringing this to any close in the foreseeable future, any improvement, I should say." Ball replied, "I think we necessarily will have to proceed on the assumption that [it] may be a long term affair." Fulbright then asked about plans for increasing U.S. personnel in Vietnam, and McNamara replied off-the-record, apparently giving the committee the figures agreed to in the NSC meeting on April 1. (It does not appear, however, that he told the committee about the change in the mission of U.S. forces to a more offensive posture.) Fulbright's response was, "It looks now as if the Administration is assuming that no longer—no further consultation or approval from the Congress is necessary in view of the resolution of last summer." Ball replied, "No, Mr. Chairman. I would say that the President has every intention of keeping in the closest consultation with the Congress on all moves of this kind." McNamara added, "I am certain that it will be the President's desire and purpose to consult with the Congress, the leadership of the Congress, members of this Committee, before undertaking any combat moves of personnel that would potentially enlarge the war." Ball added: ". . . there would be every intention to consult with the Congress on a move which appeared to engage us in a land war in Asia or appear to enlarge the American activity to the point where it could very likely lead to an expansion of the war." He said that the new troops being sent as a result of the April 1 decision were to support U.S. units already in Vietnam, and that the decision did not change the role of the U.S. or involve a greater risk of expanded hostilities.

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[191] *New York Times,* Apr. 3, 1965.

[192] Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings File, Summary of 551st NSC Meeting, Apr. 2, 1965 by Chester Cooper, Apr. 5, 1965.

[193] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers).

Using Legal Adviser Leonard C. Meeker's argument,[195] Ball said:

> I think as far as authority goes there is no serious question about the authority of the President to do anything that he needs to do in this situation, not merely because of his inherent powers as the Commander in Chief and as responsible for American policy, but also because of the resolution which was passed in August. But there is no intention to rely on that authority and neglect what seems to us and seems to the President, certainly, to be an essential element in the effective rela-

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[194] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, unpublished executive session transcript, Apr. 7, 1965.

[195] On April 6, the State Department's Legal Adviser, Leonard Meeker, anticipating that the subject of the President's authority to send troops to Vietnam would come up at the Foreign Relations Committee meeting on April 7, sent Ball a memorandum on the subject. In it he again took the position that the President had the necessary authority to send troops, even large numbers, into combat based solely on his constitutional powers. He also noted that these powers were confirmed by Congress in the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which "has the effect of supplementing that authority to the extent that any supplement might be thought needed." (SEATO, which had been approved by the Senate, was additional support, he said.) Neither the Constitution nor the resolution, Meeker noted, contained any ceilings on the number of troops that the President could deploy in any given situation. He added, however, that "The commitment of large numbers of organized United States forces to combat in Vietnam would be a matter on which the President would undoubtedly wish to consult with appropriate Congressional leaders," pointing out also that "By reason of the general legislative power of Congress, including its power over finances, there must be a basic concurrence and collaboration between the Executive and Legislative Branches of Government if any given policy and course of action of the President is to be sustained over a period of time." This memorandum is in the Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam 7B (Legality).

tions between the Executive and the Congress which is constantly in his mind.

The hearing in which these questions were raised occurred on the same day as President Johnson's major speech on Vietnam at Johns Hopkins University. Fulbright and Mansfield, who were among those invited to the White House to read the speech in advance, were encouraged by the tenor of the speech. Thus, as William Bundy has observed, the feeling of congressional leaders about not being consulted on the April 1 troop decision "did not become acute at that point." [196]

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[196] Bundy MS., ch. 25, p. 16.

CHAPTER 4

THE OLIVE BRANCH AND THE SWORD

On April 7, 1965, after having decided to increase the U.S. military commitment to Vietnam and to use U.S. troops in combat, President Johnson made a major speech at Johns Hopkins University in which he stated his willingness, in language recommended by McGeorge Bundy, to engage in "unconditional discussions," [1] and proposed a $1 billion U.S. contribution to a comprehensive regional development program in Southeast Asia centered around the development of the Mekong River.[2]

At the same time, Johnson warned that the U.S. would do "everything necessary" to help maintain the "independence of South Viet-Nam":

> We will not be defeated.
>
> We will not grow tired.
>
> We will not withdraw, either openly or under the cloak of a meaningless agreement.

He added: ". . . we must be prepared for a long continued conflict. . . . Because we fight for values and we fight for principles, rather than territory or colonies, our patience and our determination are unending."

The North Vietnamese, Russians and Chinese denounced the speech, and the next day (April 8) the North Vietnamese, declaring that it was their policy "to strictly respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam," listed four points which they said were the basis for the "soundest political settlement of the Vietnam problem." These "Four Points," which thereafter served as the authoritative statement of their position, were as follows:[3]

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[1] *Public Papers of the Presidents,* pp. 394-399. For an account of the development of the speech, which was drafted by Presidential Assistant Richard Goodwin, see Kathleen J. Turner, *Lyndon Johnson's Dual War: Vietnam and the Press* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1985), ch. 5.

[2] Beginning in the 1950s, the U.N. Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) had begun planning for the development of the Mekong River. In May 1961, Lyndon Johnson, then Vice President, was preparing for a trip to Vietnam, and he was urged by Arthur Goldschmidt, an old personal friend who was then Director of Special Fund Activities in the U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, to look into the plans which were being made. Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, Files of McGeorge Bundy, letter from Goldschmidt to Johnson, May 4, 1961.

On Dec. 8, 1964, Douglass Cater, one of his special assistants, sent the President a memorandum suggesting that the Mekong River development project might be included in a speech on Vietnam, and he cited a memorandum from Michael Forrestal to Rusk recommending that this could be used as a way of emphasizing U.S. interest in the peaceful development of Asia, thus helping to offset the effect of new military moves. (Johnson Library, White House Aides Files, Office Files of Douglass Cater.) In the memorandum, Cater asked the President to indicate whether he would be interested in the possible inclusion of the Mekong development project in a speech on Vietnam. The President replied that he would be.

Subsequently, as was indicated above, the idea of a regional development plan for Southeast Asia was included in the list of 41 non-military programs which was drawn up in March 1965 by the State Department, and submitted to the President on March 23.

[3] *New York Times,* Apr. 14, 1965. For the reactions of the Russians and Chinese, see *ibid.,* for Apr. 11.

1. Recognition of the basic national rights of the Vietnamese people—peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity. According to the Geneva agreements, the U.S. Government must withdraw from South Vietnam U.S. troops, military personnel, and weapons of all kinds, dismantle all U.S. military bases there, and cancel its "military alliance" with South Vietnam. It must end its policy of intervention and aggression in South Vietnam. According to the Geneva agreements, the U.S. Government must stop its acts of war against North Vietnam, completely cease all encroachments on the territory and sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.
2. Pending the peaceful reunification of Vietnam, while Vietnam is temporarily divided into two zones, the military provisions of the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam must be strictly respected—the two zones must refrain from joining any military alliance with foreign countries, there must be no foreign military bases, or military personnel in their respective territory.
3. The internal affairs of South Vietnam must be settled by the South Vietnamese people themselves in accordance with the program of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, without any foreign interference.
4. The peaceful reunification of Vietnam is to be settled by the Vietnamese people in both zones, without any foreign interference.

As will be seen, the reaction of the U.S. was that while it could accept the first, second and fourth points in principle, the third point, under which the Communists, working through the National Liberation Front, could take over the government, was not acceptable.

In the United States, President Johnson's speech was well-received.[4] Prior to the speech, Johnson had invited his principal Senate critics, Fulbright, Mansfield, Church and McGovern, as well as one of his leading supporters, Senator McGee, to the White House on April 7 to read the text, and all of them reacted favorably.[5]

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[4] In the Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Box 194, there is a folder containing a number of documents on the reaction in the U.S. and in other countries to the Johns Hopkins speech. Included is a memorandum from McGeorge Bundy to the President on Apr. 10, 1965, summarizing congressional responses.

Among others, John Kenneth Galbraith, who had returned to Harvard University after serving as U.S. Ambassador to India during the Kennedy administration, praised Johnson's speech. In a letter to the *New York Times* on April 7, 1965, he said that it "began to reverse" the existing military approach to the problem. Galbraith, who later became a strong opponent of the war, criticized the bombing of North Vietnam but said he supported the use of ground forces: "Assuming that we must hold a bargaining position in the cities and surrounding areas, it is ground forces which are needed. These do not block the prospect for negotiations. They do not involve even the accidental danger of escalation. They do not produce daily reports of seemingly sanguinary action. And none of our friends will imagine that we intend to begin an infantry war in Asia."

[5] See *CR,* vol. 111, pp. 7492-7498. Fulbright and Mansfield were at the White House from 1:52 p.m. to 3:20 p.m. on April 7, and Church, McGovern and McGee were there from 5:40 p.m. to 6:08 p.m.

On April 6, Carl Marcy, chief of staff of the Foreign Relations Committee, prepared a draft of a letter for Fulbright to send to the President (it was not sent) suggesting that in his speech the President should tell the North Vietnamese that the U.S. wanted peace, had no desire for territory or bases, and "desires only that the people of Vietnam be free of all external influence so that they can determine their own destiny." The U.S., the draft letter stated, would be willing

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Walter Lippmann also read (or was read) the speech in advance.[6] In a memorandum to the President on April 6, McGeorge Bundy said, "I would think it perfectly proper to show the current draft of your speech to Walter Lippmann and get his opinion. A part of our purpose, after all, is to plug his guns, and he can tell us better than anyone to what degree we have done so." [7] He added:

> The only risk I see in this is that we want to be awfully careful that the language we finally use is not harder than what he sees, and for that reason it may be better to read to him from the speech and to slide gently past the words "unconditional discussions." While I recommended these words myself and believe that they put us in a strong, balanced position, there is no doubt that some commentators will think that they are not so much a clarification as a softening of the position.

Church's visit to the White House prompted a further exchange between the Senator and the President following the earlier episode in which the President was said to have told Church to see Walter Lippmann the next time he wanted a dam in Idaho.[8] "As we [Church, McGovern, McGee] walked into this little room next to the Oval Office," Church said later, "he [President Johnson] looked up at me with a kind of glint in his eye, and he said, 'Frank, how's the dam building business going on in Idaho?' And I said, 'Well, Mr. President, it's going just fine. As a matter of fact, the next dam we build, we're going to call the Walter Lippmann dam.' Jack Valenti and McGeorge Bundy were in the room, and their faces froze. And the President froze for a minute, and then he threw his head back and laughed, and then they laughed, and everybody laughed. With that kind of gesture, he disposed of the incident." [9]

In the interview in 1969 in which he related this anecdote, Church commented on how he perceived the role of Johnson's political style in the staging and content of that Johns Hopkins speech, and generally in his response to the war:[10]

> . . . his purpose, I think that day [April 7], was to demonstrate that he was trying to do what we wanted him to do. He found himself in that position: on the one hand, saying to those who opposed the widening war that he was doing the best he could to stop it, that it took two to negotiate, and that he stood willing to walk that extra mile for peace, while he was saying to the "hawks," whose pressure he felt very strongly, that he

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to stop bombing North Vietnam if North Vietnam would cease supplying men and matériel to Communist forces in the South. Once there was a cease-fire, the U.S. would participate in an international conference to seek a neutral status for all of Vietnam. National Archives, RG 46, Marcy Chron File.

[6] In his column in the *Washington Post* on Apr. 13, 1965, however, Lippmann was less than enthusiastic. See also Turner, *Lyndon Johnson's Dual War*, pp. 126, 131-132.

[7] Johnson Library, Diary Backup for Apr. 6, 1965.

[8] See p. 129 above.

[9] Johnson Library, Frank Church Oral History, May 1, 1969.

Several days after the Johns Hopkins speech, McGeorge Bundy sent the President a memorandum suggesting that copies of the speech be sent to several persons, including McGee and Church. By McGee's name, Bundy noted: "who has been doing a great job on the campuses." All of the copies, Bundy suggested, would be inscribed by the President, " 'With warm regards and many thanks'—except perhaps Church, for whom I suggest the same inscription you gave for McGovern: 'With friendship.' " According to White House records, the copies were sent with the recommended inscriptions. Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President, memorandum of Apr. 26, 1965.

[10] Johnson Library, Frank Church Oral History, May 1, 1965.

> was sending larger numbers of troops to Vietnam, that he was upping the military effort there, broadening the scope of the war, and that he had, of course, to contend with the "doves" and others who opposed this effort, and they would have to understand that he had them to consider in the balance. And so he played a role between the doves and the hawks, and he did it much the way he used to conduct his majority leadership. He did it on the notion that there was some middle ground, always, on which the majority of the votes could be secured. That was true in the Senate where you have to find that consensus in order to enact legislation. But I think the role of the president is different from that of a senator and that this was a matter of policy that could not be cut down the middle. And his constant attempt to do it led him always to temper the military on the one hand and yet to generally move in the direction of larger warfare, reluctantly reaching out left and right in the hope that maybe something would give, some kind of peace would become possible, but, nevertheless, moving with the mainstream, and, on that, trying to base a consensus.
>
> It didn't come with the war. It couldn't come. The question was whether the policy itself was correct or wrong. And if it was wrong, it had to be changed. He was never willing to change it. In the end, of course, he finally must have recognized that the accelerating war was leading us only deeper and deeper into Asia. We were no closer to peace. The cost was out of all proportion to the national interest, but many assurances he had received from his generals had again and again failed to prove that. And so, he changed the course, called off the bombing, reversed the policy and abdicated the presidency. And now we're left to pick up the pieces.

A number of Republicans were critical of the Johns Hopkins speech, contending that the President was trying to buy peace in Asia. As Senate Republican Leader Dirksen said, "Do you buy freedom for a humble people with a billion-dollar package? I doubt it, and I also doubt that we can preserve face and prestige with such an approach." He added: "Is this another case of where the American trumpets sound retreat?" [11]

Senators Morse and Gruening were also critical. Morse said, among other things:[12]

> I heard nothing in the President's speech that suggests to me he has any negotiations in mind at all. There was a lot of lip service paid to the theory of peace, grandiose utopian verbiage was plentiful, and the dollar sign was liberally displayed, apparently in hopes of quieting criticism from abroad. But there was no language that suggested that the United States is going to return to the rule of law in Southeast Asia or that we are actively seeking a peaceful solution to its problems. There was no word that the United States plans henceforth to observe either the United Nations Charter or the Geneva Agreement of 1954. All I heard in the President's speech was that the

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[11] *New York Times,* Apr. 8, 1965.

[12] *CR,* vol. 111, pp. 7497-7498.

> United States is going to continue shooting fish in the barrel until they are all dead.

On the evenings of April 12, 13 and 14, the President met with three groups of Senators, 72 in all, primarily from the Armed Services, Appropriations and Foreign Relations Committees, for off-the-record two-hour briefings on Vietnam by Rusk and McNamara. Having held out the olive branch to the Communists and, as expected, had it rejected, he apparently was seeking to prepare the Senate for increased U.S. military involvement in the war. "In the words of one of those present . . . , 'Mr. Johnson's words contained a distinct and definite message. The message: That the South Vietnamese Army, in the face of continuing Viet Cong infiltration from the North, could not pacify South Vietnam without U.S. Army help.' "[13] Once again, despite the fact that the meetings were much smaller than those held in February-March, and that they consisted only of Members of the Senate, which has a special constitutional responsibility for advising the President in foreign affairs, there was very little exchange of views. Although a brief period was allowed for questions, the meetings consisted primarily of efforts by the President and his associates to promote the administration's position, rather than to consult with the Senators in attendance.

The March on Washington, April 17, 1965

In a memorandum to the President on Wednesday, April 14, on "Further Peace Steps in Vietnam," McGeorge Bundy suggested two possible moves:[14]

> 1. One is to announce that you are sending Hubert Humphrey to Saigon. I know you have been very reluctant to use him in foreign affairs, and for excellent reasons, but there is no doubt that such a mission would give us a great chance for public attention to the real problems; it would also help put zip and confidence into the Quat Government. (Quat has asked for him privately). He could emphasize the pacification program, the forgiveness for defectors, the search for peace, and other such noises, all within the framework of Johnsonian firmness. He would collect a number of brickbats, which would do him some good here at home. But do you want to use him this way?
>
> 2. You yourself could make a new statement which could sharpen the point that what is at stake is the future of South Vietnam and the hopes of its own people. Our Regional Development Plan is aimed at its attractions for Hanoi; I think we need to sharpen the idea that the people who really need Tender Loving Care are the victims of the struggle in South Vietnam. This would also allow us to concentrate attention on the fact that the real victims of this war are not a few bridges, but thousands and thousands of villagers. In such a comment, we could also make some sharp remarks about the refusal of

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[13] *Washington Post,* Apr. 23, 1965, "Inside Report" column by Rowland Evans and Robert Novak. These meetings were tape-recorded, and transcripts are now available at the Johnson Library, Transcripts of Vietnam Briefings.

The White House Daily Diary for Apr. 12, 13 and 14 lists those who attended the meetings.

[14] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

> all Communist capitals to engage in any kind of discussions of the way to peace.

Bundy also proposed a statement by the President to "sharpen the point that what is at stake is the future of South Vietnam and the hopes of its own people." "On Saturday," he said, "we shall have a left-wing student protest rally here in Washington, with pickets also at the Ranch [in Texas, where the President would be spending Saturday]. A strong peaceloving statement tomorrow or Friday might help cool them off ahead of time." The President agreed, and on Saturday, April 17, 1965, he issued a statement saying that although he understood the feelings of those who were against air attacks, the U.S. had no choice: "The outrage of this country and the world must be visited on those who explode their bombs in cities and villages, ripping the bodies of the helpless. The indignation of this country and the world must extend to all who seek dominion over others with a violent and ruthless disregard for life, happiness, or security." The U.S. would remain in Vietnam, he said, "as long as is necessary, with the might that is required, whatever the risk and whatever the cost." ". . . there is no human power capable of forcing us from Viet-Nam."[15]

The President's statement seemed to have little if any effect on the crowd of 15,000-20,000, including many non-students, which gathered in Washington for the April 17 march which had been agreed upon at an SDS meeting in December 1964. The demonstration began with ceremonies at the Washington Monument during which Joan Baez and Judy Collins sang and the principal speeches were made by Senator Gruening, Staughton Lynd (a history faculty member at Yale University and chairman of the march), and SDS President Paul Potter. Lynd, who was a Quaker and a pacifist, said, among other things:[16]

> We are here to keep the faith with those of all countries and all ages who have sought to beat swords into plowshares and to war no more. We are here on behalf of millions of men and women throughout the world who are crying out, What has happened to the United States? We are here on behalf of Jean-Paul Sartre.* And we are also here on behalf of those eight thousand miles from us for whom the Easter and Passover season brings death, not life. We are here on behalf of brave men who have been fighting for their country's independence

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[15] *Public Papers of the Presidents*, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, pp. 428-430. In her diary for Apr. 17, 1965, the President's wife, Lady Bird Johnson, noted that the President's statement that day was ". . . planned as a countermove, a chess play" to comments by Senator Fulbright in a press interview on Apr. 11, in which he recommended a halt in bombing, and said that a temporary cease-fire might help to bring negotiations. "By seniority he was in the position of being our party's leader in the Senate on Foreign Affairs and he is diametrically opposed to Lyndon's policy in Vietnam—a ham-stringing situation for a President." Lady Bird Johnson, *A White House Diary* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), pp. 260-261.

[16] Sale, *SDS*, p. 187. For a discussion of the march, see also James Miller, *"Democracy is in the Streets,"* cited above, and Todd Gitlin (who had been president of SDS in 1963 and helped organize the march), *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987). For a critique of the reporting of new left activities by the news media, which contains a chapter on the reporting of the April 1965 march, see Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1980). Also useful for this and other aspects of the protest movement is Melvin Small, *Johnson, Nixon, and the Doves* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1988).

*This is a reference to Sartre's cancellation in March of a lecture tour in the United States in protest against the U.S. role in the war.

> three times as long as we fought for ours, and with much less foreign assistance. We are here on behalf of the American soldiers who do not understand the reason for the war in which they are dying.
>
> Above all we are here on behalf of the women and children of that land which we have turned into a fiery furnace, whose eyes as they look out at us from the pictures and the posters, ask us, Why?

Potter roused the crowd in a speech in which he argued that U.S. intervention in Vietnam resulted from the character of the American political system, a system, he said, ". . . that disenfranchises people in the South, leaves millions of people throughout the country impoverished and excluded from the mainstream and promise of American society, that creates faceless and terrible bureaucracies and makes those the place where people spend their lives and do their work, that consistently puts material values before human values—and still persists in calling itself free and still persists in finding itself fit to police the world. . . ."[17] He continued:

> There is no simple way to attack something that is deeply rooted in the society. If the people of this country are to end the war in Vietnam, and to change the institutions which create it, then the people of this country must create a massive social movement—and if that can be built around the issue of Vietnam then that is what we must do. . . .

As the crowd marched from the monument to the Capitol, where leaders of the group planned to deliver an antiwar petition to Congress, the feelings evoked by the speeches and the music and the presence of so many like-minded people were so strong that the cry went up, "Let's *all go, LET'S ALL* GO." Afterward, Staughton Lynd described the scene:[18]

> . . . it seemed that the great mass of people would simply flow on through and over the marble buildings, that our forward movement was irresistibly strong, that even had some been shot or arrested nothing could have stopped that crowd from taking possession of its government. Perhaps next time we should keep going, occupying for a time the rooms from which orders issue and sending to the people of Vietnam and the Dominican Republic the profound apologies which are due; or quietly waiting on the Capitol steps until those who make policy for us, and who like ourselves are trapped by fear and pride, consent to enter into a dialogue with us and mankind.

The palpable urge within the group to engage in action, even civil disobedience, was restrained by leaders of the march, but it was clear that, as reflected by Lynd's attitude, more radical protests were only a matter of time if the U.S. role in Vietnam continued to grow.[19]

Some of the President's advisers warned him that opposition to the war was having an adverse effect on U.S. foreign policy. According to a memorandum from McGeorge Bundy on April 20 ("The Demonologists look at the Noise from Hanoi, Peking and Moscow"), ". . . Communist capitals greatly exaggerate the power of dissenting opinion in this country." "They all agree," Bundy said, referring to the conclusions of Llewellyn Thompson (Department of State), Ray S. Cline (CIA) and others, "that people like Lippmann, Morgenthau, Fulbright and marching students do great damage by creating false hopes in unfriendly breasts." [20]

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[17] Sale, *SDS*, p. 189. According to James Miller (p. 233), "The speech brought the crowd to its feet. As have few documents before or after, Potter's speech managed to capture the moral passion and restless questioning that constituted the heart and sole of the early New Left."

[18] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

[19] For the results of a Gallup Poll on Apr. 23, 1965 on what the public would like to see the U.S. do next in Vietnam, see p. 144 above.

At about this same time, McGeorge Bundy sent a memorandum to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover requesting information for the President on whether the Communists had played a role in the antiwar demonstration. Hoover and the President then met to discuss the matter. According to Hoover's memorandum on their conversation,

> The President informed me that he was quite concerned about the anti-Vietnam situation that has developed in this country and he appreciated particularly the material that we sent him yesterday containing clippings from various columnists in this country who had attributed the agitation in this country to the Communists as there was no doubt in his mind but that they were behind the disturbances that have already occurred. He said he had just received from Mr. McCone, the outgoing Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, a letter in which the Central Intelligence Agency stated that their intelligence showed that the Chinese and North Vietnamese believe that by intensifying the agitation in this country, particularly on the college campus levels it would so confuse and divide the Americans that our troops in South Vietnam would have to be withdrawn in order to preserve order here and it would enable North Vietnam to move in at once. . . . He stated he would like me to take prompt and immediate steps to brief at least two Senators and two Congressmen, preferably one of each Party, on the demonstrations in this country of the anti-Vietnam groups so that they might in turn not only make speeches upon the floors of Congress but also publicly. . . .

Hoover told the President that the FBI was preparing a report on the SDS, which he said was "largely infiltrated by communists," and that the same was true of the "civil rights situation which we know has large communist influence." He added that a second report was being prepared on Communist influence in antiwar demonstrations.[21]

In a memorandum to FBI staff, Hoover said that although the FBI knew there were Communists in the SDS, it might not be able to "technically state" that it was an "actual communist organization." "What I want to get to the President," he said, "is the background with emphasis upon the communist influence therein so that he will know exactly what the picture is"—a "good strong memorandum" pointing out that the demonstrations had been "largely participated in by communists even though they may not have initiated them." "At least," he added, the Bureau could say that the Communists had "joined and forced the issue."

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[20] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[21] U.S. Congress, Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, Final Report, Book III, *Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans*, S. Rept. 94-755, April 23, 1976, 94th Cong., 2d sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1976), pp. 483-484 (hereafter this will be referred to as Final Report, Book III of the Senate Select Committee to Study Intelligence Activities). The staff study from which the above quotation was taken is "The Development of FBI Domestic Intelligence Investigations," which is at pp. 373-558. No dates are given for the Bundy memorandum or the meeting of Hoover and the President.

The FBI report, which was sent to McGeorge Bundy on April 28, 1965, was characterized by a later study of a Senate committee as having "made Communist 'efforts' sound like Communist 'success.' The eight-page memorandum detailed all of the Communist Party's attempts to 'encourage' domestic dissent by 'a crescendo of criticism aimed at negating every effort of the United States to prevent Vietnam from being engulfed by communist aggressors.' "[22]

On May 25, the FBI requested authorization from the Justice Department to put a wiretap on the SDS, and this was approved by Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach.[23]

At about the same time, President Johnson also asked the FBI to supply information on critics of the Vietnam war from "name checks" of FBI files, and this information was then sent regularly to the White House.[24]

Another Decision to Send More Troops

While seeking through his Johns Hopkins speech to emphasize U.S. willingness to negotiate, and thus to respond to some of his critics, President Johnson was keeping a close eye on developments in Vietnam. On the morning of April 6, he personally telephoned Lt. Gen. Marshall Carter, Acting Director of the CIA (McCone was in the process of leaving as Director) to ask for a report on the situation. The report, delivered that afternoon, stated that ROLLING THUNDER had "little adverse effect on popular morale in North Vietnam," and that the "total military effect . . . has not been great."[25] Meanwhile, the report said, the Communists had shown their determination to intensify the war, and had continued to increase their forces in the five northern provinces of South Vietnam—a development which had been underway since late 1964.

The CIA report also stated that for the first time a North Vietnamese Army unit, the 2d Battalion (about 400 soldiers) of the 101st Regiment, 325th Division, had moved into the central highlands of South Vietnam in the area around Pleiku (Kontum Province) near the Laotian border.[26] There were also reports that other

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[22] U.S. Congress, Senate, Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations With Respect to Intelligence Activities, Final Report, Book II, *Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans*, S. Rept. 94-755, April 26, 1976, 94th Cong., 2d sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1976), p. 251 (hereafter this will be referred to as Final Report, Book II of the Senate Select Committee to Study Intelligence Activities).

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 105.

[24] *Ibid.*, p. 117.

[25] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Memorandum from the Office of Current Intelligence, "Situation in Vietnam," SC No. 04210/65, Apr. 6, 1965, with attached transmittal memoranda.

[26] By April 21, this information was said to have been "confirmed." (CIA-DIA Memorandum, "An Assessment of Present VC Military Capability," SC No. 04454/65, April 21, 1965, cited in *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 410). It should be noted that, other than unsubstantiated reports that the 325th Division, which was based in the southern part of North Vietnam, had been moved into Laos and the northern part of South Vietnam, the only source for the conclusion that the 2d Battalion, 101st Regiment of the 325th Division was in South Vietnam came from information obtained from a soldier who surrendered to South Vietnamese authorities in Kontum Province on Mar. 23, 1965 and identified himself as a member of that battalion. "Primarily as a

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elements of the 325th Division were in the area around Danang, and "Although Danang is well protected, the possibility cannot be ruled out that the Viet Cong will attempt to engage the US Marines guarding the base in at least a probing action, if not an all-out attack."

On April 9, the U.S. Intelligence Board issued a memorandum, "Recent Indications of Communist Intentions in South Vietnam," [27] which also commented on the Communist buildup in the northern provinces, and concluded that the situation in that area had "so deteriorated that an accelerated sustained effort by the VC, or an attack on some key point, could have grave consequences for the GVN." It was not possible to predict, however, the report added, where or when such an attack was most likely to occur.

On April 9-11, CINCPAC held a planning conference at which it was agreed that more U.S. forces were needed. On April 11, Westmoreland then requested, as he had proposed in his Commander's Estimate on March 26 and as the conference had recommended, that an airborne brigade (about 5,000 soldiers exclusive of support forces) be deployed to the Bien Hoa area and that an Army brigade (4,500-5,000 soldiers exclusive of support forces) be deployed to the Qui Nhon-Nha Trang area to prepare for later deployment of an Army division.[28] (An Army division in 1965, exclusive of support forces, consisted of about 15,000 soldiers.) In a cable to the State Department on April 12, Taylor, who may not have been consulted on these recommendations and apparently did not yet know that they had been made, said it was his understanding that, ". . . if the Marines demonstrate effectiveness in operating out of Danang in an offensive counterinsurgency role, other offensive enclaves may be established along the coast and garrisoned with brigade-size contingents for employment similar to the Marines." [29]

On April 13, the President met from 1:50 p.m. to 3:10 p.m. with Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Vance, and the members of the JCS—Wheeler, Johnson, Greene, McConnell and McDonald—and without waiting to see whether the Marine brigade was able to operate effectively, or consulting Taylor, he approved deployment of the 173d Airborne Brigade to the Bien Hoa area. On April 14, before he was officially informed of the decision, Taylor, who had learned about it through military channels, cabled this reaction:[30] "This comes as a complete surprise in view of the understanding reached in Washington that we would experiment with the Marines in a counterinsurgency role before bringing in other U.S. contingents."

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result of his testimony, which was substantiated by two polygraph examinations, MACV accepted presence of the unit." U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 3919, May 27, 1965. By mid-July, there were reported to be four North Vietnamese soldiers, rather than one, from whom this information had been obtained. See p. 367, fn. 4 below.

[27] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces. That same day (April 9), CIA Director McCone sent the President a copy of a briefing he had given earlier in the day, at the request of Senator Stennis (Russell was ill), to the CIA Subcommittee of the Senate Armed Services Committee, consisting of a handful of senior members of the committee, in which he discussed, with about the same frankness, the same topics that had been addressed in the CIA memorandum of April 9. Same location.

[28] CMH, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC 110825Z, April 1965.

[29] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 3332, Apr. 12, 1965.

[30] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Saigon to Washington 3373, Apr. 14, 1965.

Later that day, Taylor explained his position:[31]

> Recent actions relating to the introduction of US ground forces have tended to create an impression of eagerness in some quarters to deploy forces into SVN which I find difficult to understand. I should think that for both military and political reasons we should all be most reluctant to tie down Army/Marine units in this country and would do so only after the presentation of the most convincing evidence of the necessity.
>
> Before the Marines had been introduced in the Danang-Phu Bai area, there were at least four reasons for justifying the bringing in of US ground forces, among which was the need to assure the GVN and DRV of our determination to stay in SVN to the finish. Now that the Marines are ashore, that requirement is met and, in my opinion, no more US forces are needed to make that particular point.
>
> There remain three arguments for further reinforcements: (1) the need to do essential military tasks which GVN forces are unable to do; (2) the need to do essential military tasks faster than the GVN forces, unassisted, are able to do; and (3) the desirability of making provision for possible future crises and contingencies. Singly or in combination, these arguments could be adduced to justify almost unlimited additional deployments of US forces if such deployments did not raise counter-arguments which sooner or later outweigh the three points for the affirmative. The mounting number of foreign troops may sap the GVN initiative and turn a defense of the GVN homeland into what appears a foreign war. The increasing presence of more Americans will give Peking grounds to press military reinforcements on Hanoi. Frictions will grow between the Vietnamese and their white allies; it will become increasingly difficult to steer US and GVN policy on parallel lines. The net effect may be not an expediting of victory but its retardation.

Taylor concluded:

> I mention these countervailing factors to make the point that it is far from an unmitigated advantage to bring in more US forces. A consideration of the disadvantages convinces me that, while logistic preparations should be made now to be able to receive additional forces, the forces themselves should be held outside of SVN just as long as possible and until their need is uncontrovertible. From a purely military point of view, it is essentially wasteful of the specialized mobility of Marines and airborne troops to commit them prematurely to restricted land areas. Politically, it is undesirable to seek authority for their introduction until a clear and specific need exists which assures them an unreserved welcome from their GVN hosts.

In an interview some years later, Taylor described his reaction at the time: "Suddenly cables were coming in from all directions, and units were being alerted as if all the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps had been alerted for something in South Vietnam. Then I really got worried about it. . . . I would say that the President was so anxious to get quick results that once he decided on troops, then troops were the going thing. Everybody had troops that wanted to come." [32]

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[31] Same location, Saigon to Washington 3384, Apr. 14, 1965.

McGeorge Bundy gave Taylor's April 14 cable to the President with a cover memorandum in which he said that Taylor had learned about the decision to send the brigade as a result of a "premature" message from the JCS to CINCPAC. Moreover, he said, the cable which was being prepared to inform Taylor of the additional proposals agreed to at the April 13 luncheon "would be very explosive right now because he will not agree with many of them and he will feel that he has not been consulted." Referring to Taylor's questioning of additional deployments, Bundy added, "I am sure we can turn him around if we give him just a little time to come aboard, but I am *not* sure that you yourself currently wish to make a firm decision to put another 10,000-15,000 combat troops in Vietnam today. As Taylor says, we were planning when he left to use the Marines already on the scene in combat roles and see how that worked. It is not clear that we now need all these additional forces." [33]

Bundy suggested that the President discuss the matter with Rusk, McNamara and himself, but after talking briefly with the three advisers the President decided to proceed, and Taylor was told in a joint State-Defense cable on April 15: "Highest authority [the President] believes the situation in South Vietnam has been deteriorating and that, in addition to actions against the North, something new must be added in the South to achieve victory." [34] These were the "experimental steps" which State and Defense proposed: first, to assign some U.S. personnel to units of the South Vietnamese Armed Forces, and to conduct joint U.S.-South Vietnamese military operations; second, to deploy the airborne brigade to Bien Hoa; third, to deploy several additional battalions to coastal enclaves; fourth, to experiment with the *encadrement* of U.S. Army civil affairs personnel in one or two provincial government structures.

McGeorge Bundy personally sent Taylor another cable explaining the basis for these new proposals and stating that rather than bypassing him, the intention had been for Taylor to review the proposals as well as to obtain Quat's approval before they were put into effect. With respect to the question of additional troops, Bundy told Taylor: "President's belief is that current situation requires use of all practicable means of strengthening position in South Vietnam and that additional U.S. troops are important if not decisive reinforcement. He has not seen evidence of negative result of deployments to date, and does not wish to wait any longer than is essential for genuine GVN agreement." [35]

This was Taylor's response to McGeorge ("Mac") Bundy on April 17:[36]

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[32] CRS Interview with Maxwell Taylor, Jan. 11, 1979.
[33] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.
[34] Same location, Washington to Saigon DOD 009164, DTG 152339Z, April 1965.
[35] Same location, CAP 65125, Apr. 15, 1965.
[36] Same location, Saigon to Washington 3421, Apr. 17, 1965.

> I am greatly troubled by DOD 152339Z April 15 [the joint State-Defense cable]. First, it shows no consideration for the fact that, as a result of decisions taken in Washington during my visit, this mission is charged with securing implementation by the two month old Quat govt of a 21-point military program, a 41-point non-military program, a 16-point Rowan USIS [U.S. Information Service] program and a 12-point CIA program. Now this new cable opens up new vistas of further points as if we can win here somehow on a point score. We are going to stall the machine of govt if we do not declare a moratorium on new programs for at least six months.
>
> Next, it shows a far greater willingness to get into the ground war than I had discerned in Washington during my recent trip. Although some additional U.S. forces should probably be introduced after we see how the Marines do in counterinsurgency operations, my own attitude is reflected in EmbTel [Embassy Telegram] 3384 [April 14], which I hope was called to the attention of the President.
>
> My greatest concern arises over para 6 reftel [paragraph 6 of referenced telegram 3384 concerning *encadrement* of U.S. Army Civil Affairs personnel in provincial governments] which frankly bewilders me. What do the authors of this cable think the Mission has been doing over the months and years? We have presumably the best qualified personnel the Washington agencies (State, AID, DOD, USIA and CIA) can find working in the provinces seven days a week at precisely the tasks described in para 6. Is it proposed to withdraw these people and replace them by Army civil affairs types operating on the pattern of military occupation? If this is the thought, I would regard such a change in policy (which will gain wide publicity) as disastrous in its likely effects upon pacification in general and on US/GVN relations in particular.

He concluded:

> Mac, can't we be better protected from our friends? I know that everyone wants to help but there's such a thing as killing with kindness. In particular, we want to stay alive here because we think we're winning—and will continue to win unless helped to death.

In another cable to Washington later that day (April 17), Taylor said that the Mission Council did not share Washington's sense of urgency:[37] "The Council does not feel that there is a present deterioration in SVN which warrants taking measures which are not clearly sound and necessary. Rather than a deterioration, we feel that matters are going considerably better since early February when air attacks in the DRV began . . . we have no feeling of great crisis arising from present developments that requires us to cast aside our present carefully thought-out programs in favor of crash projects of doubtful value."

He also warned again about the adverse effects of too heavy an American hand: "If we are to build a viable independent nation here, we must continue to press and prod Vietnamese on all fronts but realize that in final analysis it is Vietnamese who must run their own affairs. Council foresees many adverse political and psychological repercussions from embarking on many of the actions outlined in Reftel [DOD 152339Z, April 15]. When they become known, our behavior will be widely interpreted as a vote of no confidence in Quat govt and will confirm the fears sometimes voiced that the Americans want to take over and run the affairs of the country without reference to the Vietnamese."

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[37] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 3424, Feb. 17, 1965.

In another cable on April 17,[38] U. Alexis Johnson expressed his own support of Taylor's position.

That same day (April 17), the JCS approved and sent to Secretary McNamara a paper describing the "Concept of Operations" for planning further deployment of U.S. forces.[39] It proposed that additional U.S. forces would "initially provide base security, phasing as soon as possible into combat counterinsurgency operations projected from secure, logistically supportable bases, and conducted in coordination with RVN forces." There would be four phases:

> Phase I—Secure bases by establishing enclaves on the coast of SVN.[40] Improve the coastal enclaves.
>
> Phase II—Conduct operations from enclaves.
>
> Phase III—Secure US inland bases and areas.
>
> Phase IV—Occupy and improve inland bases and conduct operations from them.

Faced with the reluctance of Taylor and others in the U.S. Mission to support the proposed expansion of the U.S. role in Vietnam, as well as with the need to develop a more specific plan to carry out the decisions made at the April 13 luncheon, the President directed McNamara, Taylor, General Westmoreland, General Wheeler, Admiral Sharp (CINCPAC), William Bundy, and McNaughton to meet in Honolulu on April 20.

At the Honolulu meeting, the plan approved on April 13 was affirmed. It was generally agreed that ROLLING THUNDER alone would not convince the Communists. Airstrikes were important and the Joint Chiefs wanted them increased, but the consensus was that military operations in the South, in addition to civilian programs, were needed in order to win, and that additional U.S. assistance and troops were required.

In his report to the President, McNamara said that the group had reached these conclusions:[41]

> 1. None of them expects the DRV/VC to capitulate, or come to a position acceptable to us, in less than six months. This is because they believe that a settlement will come as much or more from VC failure in the South as from DRV pain in the

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[38] Same location, Saigon to Washington 3432, Apr. 17, 1965.

[39] CMH, JCS to CINCPAC and COMUSMACV 171847Z, April 1965.

[40] Initial coastal enclave destinations, the paper stated, would be as follows:
Hue—Danang—Chu Lai—the 3rd Marine Expeditionary Force
Qui Nhon—Nha Trang—the 1st Air Cavalry Division
Bien Hoa—Vung Tau—the 173rd Airborne Brigade
Quang Ngai—Chu Lai—a South Korean infantry division

[41] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces. The text in *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 705-706 contains only about half of the actual report. McNamara's report was prepared by McNaughton from his minutes of the meeting, which are in the Johnson Library, Warnke Papers, McNaughton File.

North, and that it will take more than six months, perhaps a year or two, to demonstrate VC failure in the South.

2. With respect to strikes against the North, they all agree that the present tempo is about right, that sufficient increasing pressure is provided by repetition and continuation. All of them envisioned a strike program continuing at least six months, perhaps a year or more, avoiding the Hanoi-Haiphong-Phuc Yen areas during that period. There might be fewer fixed targets, or more restrikes, or more armed reconnaissance missions. Ambassador Taylor stated what appeared to be a shared view, that it is important not to "kill the hostage" by destroying the North Vietnamese assets inside the "Hanoi do-nut" [the area in and around Hanoi in which bombing was prohibited]. They all believe that the strike program is essential to our campaign—both psychologically and physically—but that it cannot be expected to do the job alone. They all considered it very important that strikes against the North be continued during any talks.

3. None of them sees a dramatic improvement in the South in the immediate future. Their strategy for "victory," over time, is to break the will of the DRV/VC by denying them victory. Ambassador Taylor put it in terms of a demonstration of Communist impotence, which will lead eventually to a political solution. They see slow improvement in the South, but all emphasized the critical importance of holding on and avoiding—for psychological and morale reasons—a spectacular defeat of GVN or US forces. And they all suspect that the recent VC lull is but the quiet before a storm.

Based on these factors, and on the need to "bolster the GVN forces while they are building up," the group recommended increasing U.S. forces in Vietnam, then at 65,700, to a total of 82,000 (15 manuever battalions) to be followed by a possible deployment of 41,000 more U.S. troops.

The report stated that the group also agreed on action to implement the other proposals which the President had already approved. The *encadrement* of U.S. military personnel in South Vietnamese military units was discussed, but was rejected in favor of joint or combined military operations. There was also discussion of the *encadrement* of U.S. personnel in Vietnamese provincial governments, and it was agreed that this would be attempted, but with an emphasis on providing civilian as well as military advice.[42]

In a general discussion of the future course of events it was agreed by the group that the U.S. must seize the initiative from the Communists, and that this could mean "not only that the forces they had recommended be deployed to Vietnam might not be enough, but also that it would be unwise to attempt to fix any time limit to the war." Taylor said that additional troop commitments would be necessary "if the ground war is not to drag into 1966 and even beyond." The conferees changed this to read: "drag on indefinitely." [43]

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[42] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. II, p. 360.

[43] *Ibid.*, vol. III, p. 457.

Finally, the group recommended that congressional leaders be informed about the increases in U.S. forces and the change in their role.

On April 20, the President discussed the results of the Honolulu meeting with Rusk, Ball, Vance and McGeorge Bundy at a Tuesday luncheon held from 1:10 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. "I responded," Ball said later, "with an emotional plea that the President not take such a hazardous leap into space without further exploring the possibilities of settlement; I went farther than I had intended, suggesting that a settlement might then be possible. President Johnson replied, 'All right, George, I'll give you until tomorrow morning to get me a settlement plan. If you can pull a rabbit out of the hat, I'm all for it.' "[44]

The next day (April 21), Ball gave the President a long memorandum, "Should We Try to Move Toward a Vietnamese Settlement Now?" in which he argued that bombing had not been effective, and had, in fact, increased North Vietnamese infiltration into the South, and that escalation of the war and the use of U.S. ground forces would multiply both the dangers and American responsibilities, transform the character of the war, increase American casualties, and induce Hanoi to step up the rate of infiltration.[45]

In a cover memorandum to the President, Ball said that his proposal was designed to ". . . take advantage of what may well have been a diplomatic opening provided by the North Vietnamese. I believe that Hanoi, in its answer to the 17 nation declaration, has put out a feeler—in its peculiar Oriental way—that we should not ignore."

Ball described the "risks of waiting":

> 1. We cannot continue to bomb the North and use napalm against South Vietnamese villages without a progressive erosion of our world position. . . .
>
> 2. I doubt that the American people will be willing to accept substantially increased casualties if the war continues over a substantial period of time and there are no signs of active diplomacy. Distasteful as it is, we must face the hard fact that large and articulate elements in the intellectual community and other segments of United States opinion do not believe in our South Vietnamese policy. In fact, to many Americans our position appears far more ambiguous—and hence far more dubious—than in the Korean War.
>
> > Until now, the American people have gone along out of their great confidence in you and because United States casualties have been less than a weekend's traffic accidents.
> >
> > But even a doubling of these casualties would begin to make a difference.

Ball proposed that the U.S. seek to negotiate a settlement under which there would be a cease-fire policed by an international commission. Elections would be held for a coalition government, with the National Liberation Front participating as a recognized political party. After the new government was established, the U.S. would withdraw, but the new government could ask the U.S. for assistance in the future if it felt that its independence was being threatened. Reunification with North Vietnam could occur at a specified future date if desired by the people and government of South Vietnam.

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[44] Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, p. 393.

[45] A copy of this memorandum, dated Apr. 21, 1965, and of others cited below, was provided to the author by George Ball.

Ball proposed that the U.S. should approach the North Vietnamese through an intermediary, who would ask them whether, if the U.S. agreed, they would be willing to phase down their infiltration into the South for a test period of three weeks if the U.S. reduced bombing during that period.

His memorandum, Ball said later, was a "deliberate stalling tactic, yet I could not let us take this tragically definitive step without employing all available tactics to slow the process." [46]

Also on April 21, there was a joint CIA-State-Defense assessment of Communist and world reactions to a course of action predicated on the plan agreed to on April 13 and at Honolulu to increase U.S. forces to 82,000 with ground combat as part of their mission, and to keep ROLLING THUNDER at about its current level. According to the memorandum,[47]

> At present it appears that the DRV, with strong Chinese encouragement, is determined for the present to ride out the US bombardment. The Viet Cong, the DRV, and Communist China have hardened their attitude toward negotiations, without categorically excluding the possibility under all conditions. They still consider that the tide is running in favor of the VC, despite the bombings in the South. They apparently calculate that the DRV can afford further punishment and that, in the meantime, US determination to persist will weaken because of the pressure of international and US domestic opinion, the threat of a broader conflict, and increasing DRV air defense capabilities.

Therefore, if the U.S. increased its ground forces to 82,000, the Communists would probably react, the assessment concluded, by stepping up the insurgency. *"They would likely count on time being on their side and try to force the piecemeal engagement of US troops under conditions which might bog them down in jungle warfare, hoping to present the US with a de facto partition of the country."* (emphasis in original) (At the time, U.S. analysts, as was mentioned earlier, thought that the Communists were trying to gain control of the northern part of South Vietnam.)

That same day (April 21), the President met from 11:15 a.m. to 2:20 p.m. with Rusk, Ball, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, McCone, Adm. William F. Raborn, who was to replace McCone as Director of the CIA on April 23, and McNaughton, to discuss the Honolulu recommendations. After McNamara summarized the recommendations, Ball commented that the Honolulu proposals would change the "whole relation" of the U.S. to the war, and that world reaction would be "very difficult." [48] He said that the U.S. should look carefully at the North Vietnamese Four Points proposal of April 8, which he said represented a signal of their interest in a negotiated settlement.

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[46] Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, p. 393.

[47] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[48] Apparently the only record of the meeting was handwritten notes by McGeorge Bundy, located in his papers at the Johnson Library, from which these quotations are taken.

The President asked Ball what the alternative was to U.S. policy in Vietnam, and Ball responded that he would immediately prepare a paper on the question. (In the days that followed, as will be seen, Ball outlined a plan for the "social and political reconstruction" of South Vietnam which he then discussed with former Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson and Lloyd Cutler, an influential Washington lawyer,[49] as well as with William Bundy and his deputy, Leonard Unger, Allen Whiting, and George A. Carver of the CIA.)

McCone said that the intelligence community had prepared some estimates predicting that increased U.S. military activity would produce similar action by the Communists, and the result would be a situation "in which we have no definite [*sic*] result."

The President asked why the Honolulu group had not recommended escalation of U.S. attacks on the North. McNamara replied that this might provoke action by the Chinese. "Are we pulling away from our theory that bombing will turn 'em off?" the President asked. McNamara replied: "That wasn't our theory. We wanted to lift morale; we wanted to push them toward negotiations—we've done that."

The President asked what the world reaction was to U.S. bombing, adding, "Will they let us go on?" Rusk replied: "This turns on the validity of the Baltimore [Johns Hopkins] speech." The President responded that it looked as though the U.S. was losing the "propaganda war." "They [the Communists] meet and have a party line. They follow it on through. And then you get Walter [Lippmann] and Fulbright and connections."

Ball observed that U.S. "intellectual opinion is against us." Some governments, he said, "will stay with us because they need us." But over a period of time the U.S. position in world opinion "will get badly eroded." McNamara objected, saying that the U.S. was not losing the propaganda war. "You *have* said you are ready to talk," he said to the President. (emphasis in original) The President commented: "I'd give us a C-minus and we ought to have an A." "In a very few days," he added, "we need an initiative."

At a meeting the next day (April 22), from 12:34 p.m. to 2:20 p.m. with Rusk, McNamara, Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Vance, McCone, Raborn, William Bundy, McNaughton, and General Wheeler, President Johnson approved the Honolulu recommendations. There was no NSAM and no public announcement of the decision. (Knowledgeable observers, however, such as Hanson Baldwin of the *New York Times*, reported that, in addition to other actions, the Honolulu group had recommended a substantial increase in U.S. combat forces, and that U.S. forces were beginning to engage in offensive combat operations.)[50]

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[49] See *The Past Has Another Pattern*, p. 394. See also Halberstam's description of Ball's role, especially in relation to that of McNamara, in *The Best and the Brightest*, pp. 580-581.

[50] *New York Times*, April 21, 1965. Baldwin cited specific figures on the increases which he said were being made or were being contemplated, and these were generally consistent with the actual Honolulu recommendations. In the meeting on April 21, according to McGeorge Bundy's notes, the President said that Dean Rusk, who apparently had called the *New York Times* to object to the printing of the story, "was too gentle with the *New York Times* on killing it."

On May 8, Westmoreland then sent to Washington a brief concept paper for the use of U.S. forces in combat.[51] Whereas previously U.S. forces had been used for advising the South Vietnamese and/or providing security for U.S. bases, he proposed, as had been proposed by the JCS on April 17 and agreed to at the Honolulu Conference, that U.S. forces would begin to perform combat operations both in support of the South Vietnamese, and for independent "deep patrolling and offensive operations" in areas around U.S. bases. Under the latter concept, after newly-arrived U.S. forces had established base security they would initiate reconnaissance and offensive operations against Communist bases and forces. These would initially be limited to "tactical areas of responsibility" (TACOR) around those bases agreed upon by U.S. and South Vietnamese authorities.

In his cable, Westmoreland proposed, and, as will be seen, officials in Washington agreed, that the "public stance" on the use of U.S. forces in combat should be, in part, that U.S. forces were providing combat support to the South Vietnamese rather than conducting their own offensive operations.

On April 26, McNamara held a press conference, the major purpose of which was to emphasize North Vietnamese infiltration and to "confirm" publicly that the North Vietnamese 2d Battalion, 325th Division was in Kontum Province (near Pleiku),[52] thus providing further justification for the U.S. buildup and the use of U.S. troops in combat.[53]

In another development, on April 25 Rusk announced that the U.S. would agree to participate in an international conference on Cambodian neutrality which had been proposed by Prince Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia and endorsed by the Russians, the British, and the French. (The South Vietnamese had also agreed, provided the conference would be limited to Cambodia and would not involve the question of Vietnam.)[54] Although the U.S. had opposed earlier proposals by Sihanouk for a conference, apparently Rusk and his associates now believed that such a conference could benefit the U.S. by giving it an opportunity to demonstrate its interest in negotiations and its peaceful intentions in Southeast Asia, as well as its support for indigenous non-Communist governments. Even though there was opposition from the South Vietnamese, the conference might also be used as a forum for considering a Vietnamese settlement. Moreover, an international arrangement which could help to insure Cambodian neutrality could make it easier to defend South Vietnam.[55]

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[51] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, MACV 15182, May 8, 1965, "Concept for US/Allied Combat Operations in Support of RVNAF."

[52] For the text of the press conference see the *Department of State Bulletin*, May 17, 1965.

[53] This had been reported by the CIA on Apr. 6, 1965. See p. 225 above. On May 27, the U.S. Mission in Saigon explained the usefulness of emphasizing the infiltration of these North Vietnamese military units and the possible infiltration of others: "For moment we are maintaining public posture that presence of US combat troops essentially to protect US installations and free GVN troops for action against Viet Cong. Since this posture may change, however, we see advantage in making it clear on background [telling the press, but not for attribution] that our own buildup is meant not only to perform already announced missions but also to deter and, if necessary, to meet eventuality of increased infiltration or even movement of large PAVN [People's Army of Vietnam] units into SVN." U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 3920, May 27, 1965.

[54] For these and other aspects of the proposed conference which are discussed here, see the *New York Times*. The literature on Cambodia is very sparse and there are no secondary sources which discuss these developments.

The next day (April 26), William Bundy sent the President, at his request, a memorandum on "Additional Diplomatic Moves," [56] which he opened by saying, "Most of what I would suggest could be used whether or not the Cambodian Conference fails. Some of it should be given a harder push if we don't get the Cambodian conference."

(The Cambodian conference not only failed, but on May 3, 1965, Cambodia broke diplomatic relations with the U.S.) [57]

Bundy said that he did not believe the U.S. should call for a conference on Vietnam "unless and until we have some real sign of 'give' from Hanoi." (He did not think there would be such a sign in the near future.) To propose a conference in the absence of a sign would be demoralizing to the South Vietnamese and could result in strong pressure for an end to the bombing of North Vietnam.

Barring a conference on Cambodia or Vietnam, there was, however, the possibility of negotiations on Laos, which the Russians and the North Vietnamese had proposed, and which the U.S. was willing to accept under certain conditions.

Whether or not action began on any of these possible negotiating tracks, Bundy said, the U.S. would gain "propaganda advantage" by clarifying its position. There were two ways this could be done. First, after consulting with the South Vietnamese, the U.S. and the Government of South Vietnam could announce that they were prepared, "*after* South Vietnam has been freed of external interference—to envisage free elections in both North and South Vietnam on the issue whether there should be a single united Vietnam." (emphasis in original) This had been provided by the 1954 Geneva Accords, Bundy noted, but the elections "were not carried out for the simple reason that North Vietnam (and, to be honest, South Vietnam as well) was not prepared to accept anything that would have been truly free." Such a proposal for elections could be made safely, he said, ". . . without the Communists daring to call our bluff. If they ever admitted enough supervisory machinery to insure real freedom of choice in the north, they would so expose their system that it would be almost undermined."

Second, the U.S. and South Vietnam could consider "some method of determining the popular will *within* South Vietnam once the aggression has stopped." (emphasis in original) "This," he added, "is the gist of George Ball's recommendation, which is that we say we would be prepared to see free elections to determine the government in the south, with the [National] Liberation Front allowed to participate just like any other party and without trying to count noses vigorously on whether former Viet Cong had in fact come originally from the north."

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[55] On April 23, Sihanouk, after meeting with Chinese Premier Chou En-lai, announced that he was opposed to including the United States, South Vietnam, and Thailand in a conference on Cambodia, and was also opposed to discussing Vietnam at the conference. Chou En-lai made a similar statement.

[56] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[57] In announcing the break, Cambodia denounced the U.S. for U.S.-South Vietnamese bombing of a Cambodian village and a *Newsweek* article which was said to reflect adversely on Sihanouk's mother.

This, too, would have a "useful propaganda effect," but it could lead to various complications, as well as casting doubt on the legitimacy of the existing South Vietnamese Government. Bundy added that, for these reasons, he was doubtful about this second proposal.

In keeping with Ball's recommendation and with William Bundy's suggestion that the U.S. should consult with the South Vietnamese about clarifying objectives, McGeorge Bundy prepared a memorandum on April 25, "Notes on Political Objectives," recommending that the U.S. seek to get the South Vietnamese to issue "a comprehensive statement of the elements of a good eventual solution inside South Vietnam" for which the U.S. could then declare its support. This, he added should be a "top order of business—we need to balance this problem [*sic*] against our military program right away." [58] McGeorge Bundy proposed that the statement should include:

1. Internationally validated free elections, first locally, then regionally, and finally on a national basis.
2. A broad and generous offer of political amnesty to all who abandon the use of force, coupled with the right of repatriation to the North, or opportunities for peaceful resettlement in South.
3. A clear opportunity for the people of South Vietnam themselves to express themselves directly on the peaceful presence of Americans and other foreigners in helping with the peaceful progress of Vietnam.
4. Reciprocal guarantees against any border violation with all neighbors of South Vietnam, and a readiness to accept international patrols along these borders.
5. A declaration of intent to work for the unification of all Vietnam by the free choice of its people and a readiness to accept nationwide free elections for this purpose if this position is:
    a. Supported by the people of South Vietnam in appropriate constitutional process
    b. Accepted by the Government of North Vietnam, and
    c. Validated by effectively guaranteed rights of free political activity for all parties in both parts of the country.

As will be seen, in June, after discussions with U.S. officials, the new government of Ky and Thieu issued a statement of South Vietnamese political objectives, and the U.S. offered its support.

Congress "Reaffirms" the U.S. Commitment

After the decision on April 22, according to William Bundy, there could have been a major review by Congress of U.S. policy toward Vietnam, which could even have led to a new congressional resolution supporting the President, but the Dominican "crisis" intervened:[59]

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[58] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[59] Bundy MS., ch. 25, pp. 17-18. In the Dominican Republic, beginning on April 24, supporters of former civilian President Juan Bosch tried to overthrow the military junta that had forced Bosch from office. On April 28, President Johnson sent U.S. Marines ashore, purportedly for the protection of American citizens, and within several days there were 21,000 U.S. military personnel deployed on the island. Settlement of the dispute and removal of U.S. military personnel took several months.

> In the week of April 22 to April 29, he [the President] was close to putting together the kind of total policy picture that might have fitted with a thoroughgoing review with the Congress. A systematic force program and strategy had been developed, new peace tactics were under intensive study under George Ball, and other countries were being canvassed actively for force and assistance contributions. All these actions might have "put it all together" for an intensive consultation with Congress during May, and perhaps a reaffirmed Resolution of some sort. . . .
>
> Between April 30th and May 7th, however, the Dominican crisis intervened, and from then until the end of May took up the overwhelming attention of the President and all his senior advisors. Vietnam was handled with the left hand, and whatever chance there might have been of a careful Congressional review went by the board.

News stories after the Honolulu meeting about an expansion of the U.S. role in the war resulted in what a *Washington Post* reporter called "a new flurry of alarm of Capitol Hill." [60] On April 21, in response to such reports, Senator Mansfield reiterated his praise of the President's April 7 speech, and called again for international negotiations. Senator Aiken agreed. So did Senator Morse, who said that the U.S. should "rededicate herself to the great ideal that Franklin [D.] Roosevelt set out in Cairo and Tehran 20 years ago . . . for an international trusteeship for Indochina." [61]

Senators Javits and Clark urged the President to request new approval from Congress if he intended to increase substantially the U.S. commitment.[62]

Senator Church proposed unconditional discussions and a cessation of bombing, which Senator Fulbright had proposed earlier in April, in return for agreement on a cease-fire.[63] Senator Robert Kennedy went to the White House in late April to urge this course on the President.[64]

Generally, however, Members of Congress refrained from commenting publicly on the situation. In part, this was due to their involvement in other things, especially Great Society legislation. It was also due to a reluctance to comment on possible new U.S. moves in Vietnam, given the domestic as well as international sensitivities involved, or to question or criticize the President openly. In addition, of course, the lack of comment from Congress signified the fact that most Members still supported or felt they had to support the President's handling of the situation.

Many Members, particularly those on the key committees, were also uncertain about what Congress could or should do. Although there was some interest in a new resolution authorizing an expanded role for the United States, especially by those who did not think the existing resolution had authorized a large-scale war, it was also difficult to argue that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was inadequate. Moreover, except for Morse, who believed that such a move would be defeated, and that this would strengthen public and congressional opposition, no one seemed to want to take the more formal and drastic step of declaring war.

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[60] *Washington Post,* Apr. 24, 1965.

[61] *CR,* vol. 111, pp. 8124-8125, 8201.

[62] *Ibid.,* p. 8270

[63] *Washington Post,* Apr. 24, 1965.

[64] Johnson, *The Vantage Point,* p. 136. Apparently there are no notes of this conversation.

The resulting dilemma was apparent when the Senate Foreign Relations Committee met in executive session on April 30 to hear Rusk testify on the Dominican Republic and on Vietnam.[65]

The day before the meeting, Rusk had met with Mansfield, Fulbright, and Hickenlooper (the ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee) to discuss with them the "general plans" for deploying additional troops.[66] (William Bundy and McNamara met with other Members of Congress for the same purpose.) At this smaller meeting, Rusk was able to discuss specific information which he did not want to discuss before the full committee, even in executive session.[67]

That morning (April 29), William Bundy sent to Rusk "Briefing Notes" for the meeting with the three Senators to Rusk in which he said it was his judgment, and "in accord with what Secretary McNamara is saying," that Rusk should not reveal that beginning about June 1 Westmoreland would use Marines in an offensive combat role up to 50 miles from their bases.[68] Instead, Bundy recommended that Rusk should mention only the first two stages of the Marine Mission at Danang: (a) close patrolling to about 10 miles, which was already being done, and (b) patrolling to about 20 miles, and should stress that these roles were collateral to the Marines' security mission. "At the same time," he told Rusk, "you should naturally make no effort to minimize that even (a) and (b) will bring the units into fire fights with the VC, as they are already doing on a small scale."

During the hearing on April 30 Fulbright asked Rusk whether, in view of the increasing number of U.S. military personnel in Vietnam, it was the administration's intention to request further authorization by Congress, "for what appears to be quite an enlarged operation from that which was contemplated last summer when the [Gulf of Tonkin] resolution was passed. . . ." Rusk replied, "we have not, quite frankly, taken that up for systematic discussion. We do not now have a plan to ask for further resolutions on this subject unless there is some substantial development from the other side in the general scale of operations, unless the situation takes quite a different turn."

During the hearing, Rusk did not tell the members of the committee—nor did they ask—that the President had already approved troop increases up to 82,000, with another 41,000 being considered. He said only, "We have there now about 34,000 troops. It is very much under contemplation that it might be necessary to add to those forces additional forces. . . ." He added that, with respect to whether there should be another congressional resolution, "We do not at the present time have in mind such a change in the scale of forces I think to raise that question as an immediate problem."

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[65] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, unpublished executive session transcript, Apr. 30, 1965.

[66] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 74 D 164, "President's Evening Reading Items, 1965," Memorandum from Benjamin H. Read, Executive Secretary of the Department of State, to McGeorge Bundy, Apr. 29, 1965. There are no notes on the meetings which Rusk, Bundy and McNamara held. Read's memorandum says only that they discussed the "general plans for deployment of additional troops . . . [and] gave the rationale for the planned positioning of 8,000-10,000 new troops in two locations in Vietnam."

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S.

Rusk also objected to a resolution that might authorize specific numbers of troops, saying that in order to provide adequate flexibility to the President, any numerical authorization would have to be of such a size that it would be inflammatory, thereby increasing the risks of counterreaction by the Communists. "Whereas if we, within the lines of existing policy, keep in touch with Congressional leaders about the more important moves, we feel we have both the policy consensus and the kind of consultation that keeps the two branches of the government in close contact on these specific moves."

In an interview some years later, Rusk was asked about this testimony, and this was his reply:[69]

> I was under instructions from the President not to promise the Congress advance consultation on the exact numbers of troops. He considered that to be a matter for him to decide under the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, and, indeed, independently in his own role as Commander in Chief. There were several times when some members of the committee tried to get me to promise that before there was any further increase of troops we would come back down there and get their approval. I was never in a position to make any such promise, because among other things the President wouldn't let me.

Rusk was asked, "Did you want to?" He replied, "No. I think the President is Commander in Chief, and I don't think that a committee of 535 can run a war."

He was also asked to describe what, under the President's instructions, he could consult with Congress about, and he said: "The general policy of the operations as well as the political issues that might be involved in trying to bring it to a negotiated conclusion, and the responses to overtures that might or might not be made by this or that government or individual group; not on the actual conduct of military operations."

In the hearing on April 30, Fulbright also referred to the general understanding which he said prevailed at the time the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was passed, namely, that Congress was reaffirming the existing limited mission and role of the U.S. in Vietnam. "But in effect we are—for practical purposes we are waging war on North Vietnam. I do not know whether this constitutional practice [declaring war] is completely outdated or not, but it would seem to me not out of order if we are going to send 30,000, 50,000, 100,000 men, that the Congress might have the say about it."

Fulbright added, "This operation in Vietnam has obviously become quite controversial. A lot of us have been quiet. We do not want to embarrass the administration . . . because we realize this is a very difficult situation."

Senator Clark agreed with Fulbright.[70]

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[69] CRS Interview with Dean Rusk, Nov. 17, 1978.

[70] On May 5, McGeorge Bundy had breakfast with Clark, after which he described Clark's position in a memo to the President. Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

Continued

Senator Hickenlooper questioned whether there should be another debate, and said he did not think a renewal of the resolution would accomplish anything. "It would seem to me that it would only add to the conviction of the Communist forces that they are winning this thing and that we are running for cover."

Senator John J. Williams (R/Del.) asked how another resolution could be drafted to avoid having it interpreted as a declaration of war. Rusk, who was opposed to a declaration of war, replied that he did not know what Congress would want to say beyond what it had already said in the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

Senator Case of New Jersey, a liberal internationalist, expressed his uneasiness about the situation, but said he still supported the administration and did not think a new resolution would be useful.

Senator Eugene McCarthy, who had just become a member of the committee, returned to Fulbright's point, and said he did not think the administration had given any testimony on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution to indicate that the resolution would authorize the kind of expansion which was taking place. If the administration continued to argue that there was ample authority in that resolution, he said, more Members of Congress would be apt to reconsider the "authority which we supposedly gave."

Senator Mundt, a conservative Republican, also questioned the basis for such an expansion of U.S. forces in Vietnam, saying that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution "is a pretty ambiguous base on which to project reasons why we continue what we are doing in Southeast Asia."

Senators Church and Claiborne Pell said they favored debate on the subject, but did not think another resolution would be desirable. Church, particularly, took this position, saying, ". . . we should try to develop some kind of political consensus if that's possible. We ought to try and apprise the American people of the kind of alternatives that face us out there."

Senator Morse spoke that afternoon in the Senate, where he again chastised his colleagues for not recognizing that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution gave "broad, sweeping power" to the President to wage war in Vietnam. He took the position, however, that the committee should bring up the resolution again, "and give the Senate an opportunity to decide whether it wants to reaffirm its

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He said that Clark "is clearly in tough shape. He simply does not like the notion of contest and conflict with any Communists, and yet he does not want to break with you publicly. We went up and down Santo Domingo and Vietnam and Disarmament, but it all comes back to the fact that he believes the Cold War is more our fault than that of the Communists. He believes we are fighting unnecessary wars when we should be making a basic settlement with Moscow against Peking—and if necessary, against the Germans, whom he dislikes intensely. He thinks that you are getting too much hard-nosed advice from Rusk, McNamara, and Bundy, and not enough soft advice from Humphrey, Moyers, and Fulbright (this is his way of stating it, not mine, and I cooled him off a lot by telling him that Humphrey was absolutely firm and clear-cut on the need to go into Santo Domingo last week).

"Clark is furious at our supplemental for Vietnam [requested on May 4—see below], but he thinks he will probably have to vote for it. I asked him point-blank whether he would have let the Dominican Republic go Communist. He said, 'No,' but he obviously prefers to believe tha there was no such danger and that we were deluded by McCarthyite-CIA reports (this again is his imagery, not mine).

"Clark is in the very uncomfortable position of a man who has plenty of convictions, but not quite enough courage to give them full expression. I see no chance whatever of changing his mind on any of these issues, but I think he can be kept moderately quiet by the simple fact that he is not ready to break with you—though emotionally, he would certainly like to."

position of last August, or declare war, or terminate the power that it thought it could give to the President. . . ." [71]

President Johnson's reaction to these various expressions of congressional opinion was to turn the issue back on Congress by what William Bundy says "can only be described as a gimmick." [72] On May 4, Johnson sent Congress a request for $700 million for additional efforts in both Vietnam and the Dominican Republic (which was included in order to give the overall request added urgency and appeal). Included in the request was this statement: "This is not a routine appropriation. For each Member of Congress who supports this request is also voting to persist in our effort to halt communist aggression in South Vietnam. Each is saying that the Congress and the President stand united before the world in joint determination that the independence of South Vietnam shall be preserved and communist attack will not succeed." [73] "In effect," William Bundy says, "the President sought to make the appropriation of a relatively small sum—not in fact related to any specific program or its costs—into a small-scale new Tonkin Gulf Resolution. . . . the issue was loaded, for a negative voter had to take a position that could be depicted as denying help to American soldiers already in the field." [74]

Prior to sending the request to Congress, Johnson held a meeting of Democratic and Republican congressional leaders at the White House on Sunday, May 2, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Present were the President, and, from the House, Speaker McCormack, Albert, Boggs, Ford, Leslie C. Arends (R/Ill.), F. Edward Hébert (D/La.), chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Mrs. Frances P. Bolton (R/Ohio), ranking Republican on the Foreign Affairs Committee, and, from the Senate, Mansfield, Fulbright, Stennis, Hickenlooper, Aiken, and Kuchel. According to a press report, "He [the President] made it clear he was upset about the Capitol Hill sniping. . . ." "Through most of the monologue," the story said, "Mr. Johnson was glaring at Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas, his old friend who had called for a pause in the bombing of North Vietnam. Mr. Johnson implied that Congress ought to show the world it really backs up his policies." [75]

On May 4, 1965, the day the supplemental appropriation request was submitted to Congress, Johnson met from 10:10 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. with Speaker McCormack, Senator Mansfield, and the more senior Democratic and Republican members of the House and Senate foreign policy, Armed Services and Appropriations Committees (32 Senators and 108 Representatives). The Vice President, Rusk, and McNamara also attended, along with members of the White House staff. To heighten the event's political impact, the press was invited to attend the first part of the meeting during which the President spoke for 35 minutes on problems in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic.

The President said that the United States had committed itself to the defense of South Vietnam, and that, ". . . the aim [of the

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[71] *CR*, vol. 111, p. 9111.

[72] Bundy MS., ch. 25, p. 18.

[73] *Public Papers of the Presidents*, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, p. 494.

[74] Bundy MS., ch. 25, p. 19.

[75] *Washington Post*, May 3, 1965.

Communists] in South Viet-Nam is not simply the conquest of the south, tragic as that would be. It is to show that the American commitment is worthless . . . and once they succeed in doing that, the gates are down and the road is open to expansion and to endless conquest. . . . Thus we cannot and we will not and we must not withdraw or be defeated." "We are faced," he said, "with the dilemma that we can't go north and we shouldn't go south, and we can't negotiate. So what do we do?" His answer was that the U.S. should continue its defense of Vietnam "until someway, somehow, we find a civilized solution and a readiness to exchange views across the conference table." In the "long run," he said, "there can be no military solution to the problem of Vietnam and we all realize that. We know that we must find someway, somehow, a path to peaceful settlement, and all the resources and brains of our Government are relentlessly pursuing every possible alternative." [76]

At the conclusion of the President's remarks, the chairmen of the House Armed Services (Rivers) and House Appropriations Committees (George Mahon expressed their support for him, and for the supplemental appropriation. There were no dissenting statements from the group. Although the President told the group that Rusk and McNamara were there to answer their questions, there were very few questions, and the meeting adjourned only 30 minutes after the President finished speaking.

That same day (May 4), Senator Hugh Scott, a member of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, privately informed the State Department that the committee had met to discuss the President's request, and that "there was no opposition to the request and all members agreed it was reasonable." [77]

Congress required only two days to approve the President's request. The House passed the bill the next day (May 5). Speaker McCormack declared that "history is in the making," and that failure to approve the request could lead to "appeasement." Majority Leader Albert took a similar position, saying that the "road of appeasement is the road to war," and urging approval of "this resolution of determination to keep our word, this resolution to tell the entire world that we are not going to bow to Communist aggression."

Minority Leader Ford said that Republicans in the House stood unanimously behind the President's "policy of firmness" in Vietnam, and fully supported the request. He and Representative Laird also stressed the need to support the President in order to avoid miscalculation by the Communists. "The real danger we face in the world today," Laird said, "is that the potential enemy will miscalculate the intentions of the United States of America to defend freedom and to live up to its treaty obligations, whether they be in southeast Asia or whether they be in Central or Latin America." Ford said he was disturbed to see people carrying the placard, "Why Die for Vietnam?" "This, I think," he added, "could lead to a miscalculation by the enemy of the firmness of our policy and the unanimity of our people."

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[76] *Public Papers of the Presidents*, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, pp. 484-492.

[77] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 74 D 164, Memorandum for the President from Secretary Rusk, May 4, 1965.

Laird and others criticized the Vietnam teach-ins, and Laird's Republican colleague from Michigan, Representative Elford A. Cederberg, commented, "I submit that the vast majority of the professors and others who question our Nation's policy have little or no knowledge of the real fundamental problem confronting the free world. They prefer to close their eyes to the lessons of history and the tragic results of appeasing a godless ideology. These apostles of appeasement should be grateful that they live under a government that allows the right of dissent."

Rivers, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, which had also unanimously approved the request, also came down hard on dissent, saying, "There are voices of dissent in the country and in Congress. These voices must be shown as unrepresentative of the great weight of public and congressional opinion. And this is the way to do it."

Robert L. F. Sikes (D/Fla.), chairman of the House appropriations subcommittee which handled military appropriations bills, said that a vote for the bill was "a vote for victory with the least possible delay. It will show that there is no serious division among the American people on the question of standing together against the enemies of our way of life."

Others in the Democratic and Republican leadership and senior Members in the ranks of both parties took similar positions, as did many others in the House. A one-hour limitation on general debate, however, severely restricted the amount of time available for discussion of the bill. This brought criticism from both sides of the aisle, and Representative Peter Frelinghuysen of New Jersey, a senior Republican on the Foreign Affairs Committee, doubtless expressed the feelings of many Members when he said, "The size of the amount requested, the way in which this resolution is being rushed through the House, and the failure of anyone who has thus far spoken today to give any details regarding the way in which this money will be used, make it difficult to make an honest evaluation of a resolution of such tremendous significance."

Laird, chairman of the House Republican Conference, also criticized the way in which the President had conducted the meeting of congressional leaders on May 3, which he said was more a briefing than a consultation. He said he would henceforth attend leadership meetings at the White House only if an agenda had been provided in advance. "Such an agenda," he added, "would insure that the minority party will also have an opportunity to present its views before policies are established."

During the debate, several liberal Democrats and Republicans said they would vote for the bill (including such Members as Lindsay, Bingham, Sidney R. Yates [D/Ill.], Rosenthal), but that they had doubts about U.S. policy in Vietnam, and did not want their votes construed as support for that policy. A handful of others said they could not support the bill. One was Representative Edith Green (D/Ore.), who said that she had supported U.S. policy toward Vietnam, but that "there is a point beyond which credibility simply will not stretch—and it is that somehow by waging a wider war we pursue a policy of peace." The vote represented, she said, "a vote for that delusion." She added:

> One of the things the vote . . . will be interpreted to mean . . . is congressional approval for the continued bombings of Northern Vietnam and commitment of thousands and thousands of American troops to a war the justice and wisdom of which has been questioned inside and outside this Nation by citizens and friends of unimpeachable loyalty. I think it also clearly means the relinquishment by Congress of its constitutional authority to declare war, for if the President can direct bombing raids on North Vietnam by simple Executive fiat, why can he not direct similar action against any other nation at any other time? Why bother to ask? Once the bomb is dropped, it can always be pointed out that rightly or wrongly—legally or illegally—we are in a war and that American lives are at stake and that it would be disloyal to not approve funds for the war.

The House approved the request without amendment by a vote of 408-7. Except for John Conyers, Jr., a liberal Democrat from Michigan, all of those voting "no" were liberal Democrats from the West Coast (Brown, Phillip Burton and Don Edwards from California and Green of Oregon), or from New York (William Fitts Ryan and John G. Dow).[78]

In the Senate, where the request was unanimously approved by the Appropriations and Armed Services Committees meeting jointly on the morning of May 5, there was also a strong patriotic tide during Senate debate that afternoon, and similar arguments were made about the need to support the bill.[79] Stennis, who was in charge of the bill in the absence of the ailing Russell, said, "The only question is, Are we going to give the men who we have already sent off to do jungle battle the tools with which to fight? That is the only question." ". . . if the Senate should refuse to pass the joint resolution, or even should pass it by less than an overwhelming vote," Stennis added, "it will be notice to the world that the United States is backing up. The only inference from that would be that soon the United States will pull out. . . . Moreover, it would be a direct message sent by us to our fighting men whom we sent forth to foreign lands, that we are not going to back them up with a sufficient quantity of the tools of war."

Gordon Allott (R/Colo.) portrayed the issue succinctly and sharply: "The fact is that we are there and that we must win."

Mansfield said that as majority leader he would support the request,

> But let no one misunderstand this vote. There is not one Senator who does not regret, with the President, the necessity for it. There is not a Senator who would not prefer, with the President, that a decent peace might be achieved quickly in Vietnam. But we will vote for this measure because there is not one Member of this body who does not desire to uphold the President and those who are risking their lives in seeking to carry out the policies of this Government. Even Senators who vote against this measure do so out of a sincere conviction that it is the best way to help him.

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[78] House debate on the bill is in *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 9518-9541.

[79] Senate debate on the bill is in *ibid.*, pp. 9453-9455, 9492-9507, 9729-9772.

Minority Leader Dirksen said that the Senate had the duty to support the President, ". . . for when it appears that we have feet of clay and that we are leading from weakness, may the Lord help our country. . . . There is no substitute for victory. Our prestige must be maintained, because if there is anything to the appellation that we are the leaders of the free world, what a tragic impairment of that title there will be. We shall be scoffed at. All the little countries everywhere in the world will be able to say, with some truth, that a little country of 14 million people humbled the greatest country on the face of the earth. . . ."

Other Democratic and Republican leaders and senior Members of the Senate took a similar position. Saltonstall, ranking Republican on the Armed Services Committee, said, "We are faced with a realistic but a simple fact. Our troops are in South Vietnam and we must supply them." Russell Long of Louisiana, the Democratic whip, said that a "show of strength" was necessary to stop Communist aggression. "Speeches delivered on this floor and votes which would suggest that this Nation should get out of Vietnam . . . contribute to the Communist notion that they can put pressure upon us, and that if they continue their campaign of assassination and terror and step it up, America will pull out."

Democratic Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia also urged a strong vote for the bill, saying, "Too often in the past, as a result of statements, and speeches, and as a result of the recent pacifistic demonstrations which took place here in the Nation's Capital, our signals to Hanoi may appear to have been confused."

Various other Senators, notably Javits, Clark, Church, Robert Kennedy, Gore, Aiken, Frank Carlson (R/Kan.), and Cooper, said they would support the request, but had doubts about U.S. policy, and did not want their votes to be interpreted as favoring that policy.[80] (Fulbright and McGovern were absent during the debate and the roll-call vote.) Javits in particular made the point that neither the President's request nor congressional action on it was an adequate substitute for the kind of supplementary resolution which he had been advocating, adding, "I want to be consulted again." "We should not sneak in with the use of American troops for ground combat in South Vietnam," he said. If the President intended to escalate the war to a new and different level, Congress should be asked for further authorization.

He continued:

> I supported the resolution of August 10 [Gulf of Tonkin], and I have relatively little doubt that I and others would support the President in an escalation of the struggle to involve ground forces, if the reasons for this action are so substantial that they can be submitted to Congress and to the country. After some debate by Congress, which need not be protracted, the people of the United States and the President would have the feeling of confidence which is derived from exploring a great national decision and arriving at a proper decision.

Clark, who said he agreed with Javits, asked whether it would not be better "to be candid and ask for a declaration of war."

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[80] For Kennedy's position see also Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), pp. 729-730.

Javits replied that it would be. Clark argued that rather than escalating the war, the U.S. should seek a peaceful settlement, but he said that "with great reluctance and a heavy heart" he would vote for the request in order to support the President's hand in negotiations and to uphold the U.S. commitment.

Cooper said that he, too, would support the request, despite the fact that the "war in Vietnam has expanded and that no one can foresee the end." But he urged the President to continue to find a way to negotiate a settlement.

Aiken took a similar position, saying that his vote for the request should not be taken as an "endorsement of the costly mistakes of the past, nor as authority to wage war in the future unless such war has been declared by Congress." Carlson agreed.

Church sought refuge in a series of questions by which he attempted to establish a "legislative record" that action on the request would not constitute congressional approval of "future acts in Vietnam about which we can know nothing at this time." Stennis replied, "We are backing up our men and also backing up the present policy of the President. If he substantially enlarges or changes it, I would assume he would come back to us in one way or another." Stennis added, however, that he did not think congressional approval of the bill "carries any limitations on the President's judgment with reference to carrying out his present activities."

Church said that he had supported increased U.S. military activity, and recognized the need to support U.S. forces in the field, but he also believed that "full-scale American involvement in a land war in Asia would be the greatest possible calamity." He concluded by saying that he would vote for the bill, "but I shall do so with the understanding, supported by this colloquy, that no blank-check endorsement of decisions to be made in the future is involved, which would drastically alter the dimensions of the American commitment in this part of the world."

The bill was opposed by Morse and Gruening, who were joined by one other Democratic Senator, Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin. Morse and Gruening were the only two Members of Congress to vote against the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964. Nelson had severe reservations about that resolution, although he voted for it. He wanted to amend it in an effort to control Presidential discretionary authority, but he was persuaded not to offer the amendment.

Morse said that in his 20 years in the Senate the only other time he had been as "deeply disturbed and moved" was in 1955, in connection with the "preventive war" Formosa Resolution. The President, he said, was "acting outside the Constitution in conducting this undeclared war in Asia. Senators seek to give him additional authority, but it is not within their senatorial power, for they cannot delegate the power to make war." Those who voted for the bill would be voting for the continuation of an undeclared war, as well as for an increased draft. "They will be voting for all that Goldwater stood for in the recent presidential election."

Morse scoffed at the assertion that the funds were needed to support U.S. forces, pointing out that the President himself had said that action by Congress was not necessary in order for the $700 million to be spent. He also railed against the "reservationists," as he called other Senators who said that their vote for the bill should not be considered an endorsement of Vietnam policy. "Whom do they think they are kidding," said Morse. Pointing out that many Senators engaged in a "pathetic exercise" when they explained their vote for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution on that basis, he declared, "I think the White House must be laughing at their 'reservation.' It is only votes that are binding upon the Pentagon or the White House, not the opinions of Senators of how the Executive should exercise the powers Senators are going to vote him today. . . . This is the second time in 10 months that Senators have, in the phrase of the poet, 'Vowing she would ne'er consent, consented.' "

When Morse finished speaking, Dirksen, who had been strongly opposed to U.S. military involvement in a land war in Indochina in 1954, launched an uncommonly severe attack on Morse, saying, among other things:

> I want the word to go out to those who represent us in Vietnam that we back home, on the homefront, are in their corner if they need us. It would be a sorry spectacle, indeed, if word should be sent out this afternoon by shortwave: "You have been let down by the U.S. Senate," as the Senator from Oregon wants us to do. . . . No word of mine will ever impair their morale; no word of mine will get into an international monitoring service to be broadcast on the radio out of Hanoi, as has been done with the words of the Senator from Oregon (Mr. Morse).

Dirksen concluded by saying that after its recent meeting the Communist Party of Illinois, calling the U.S. the aggressor, had urged its supporters to contact Members of Congress about negotiating an end to the war. "I do not ever want it to be said," Dirksen added, "that they finally succeeded in persuading enough people, finally, to relent in our efforts in Vietnam, and then to crow about it and say how they are influencing American policy both at home and abroad, thereby humbling this great Republic. It would be a tragedy of the first order if that should ever happen."

Morse replied, "We have heard it, now, from within the Senate, as well as from the White House: 'Criticize the warmaking policy of this administration, and you aid and abet the Communists.' " He said that until there was a declaration of war, which he opposed, he would continue to speak out.

In his speech opposing the bill, Nelson carefully analyzed what he called the "consensus" in the Senate on Vietnam: first, no one favored an immediate pullout; second, no one took the position that the U.S. should never negotiate an end to the war; third, "ultimately, the Vietnamese will have to solve their problems themselves." Thus, he concluded, the meaning of this consensus was that, "The United States can play a useful role in Vietnam—but in the long run it can be useful and successful only if the Vietnamese people can establish a viable government with broad public support and the capacity to defend its own freedom." "To make a massive commitment of American troops," Nelson added, "would be to overlook the fundamentals of this consensus." "A major investment of troops would certainly lead to a long war. But what would be the final outcome? Does anyone seriously believe that even a million

American troops can produce ultimate stability in Vietnam? Surely at the end of a bloody war we will again have to search for a negotiated settlement. White men cannot impose peace in Asia—even by overwhelming force."

Nelson was critical of the way the bill was being rushed through Congress: "In the cloakrooms and on the floor, numerous distinguished Senators from both sides of the aisle have expressed their concern over the precipitate manner in which we are disposing of this matter. . . . at a time in history when the Senate should be vindicating its historic reputation as the greatest deliberative body in the world we are stumbling over each other to see who can say 'yea' the quickest and the loudest. I regret it, and I think some day we shall all regret it."

Nelson was careful, however, not to criticize the President directly: "The President is trying to find a moderate way to resolve the problems of Vietnam. He needs no warlike demands from the militants. What he needs is support for the course of moderation and negotiation he has initiated."

Nelson said he was going to express his opposition to the procedure being used to obtain quick action on the bill by voting against the request, while recognizing that the bill was overwhelmingly supported by Congress. "Obviously you need my vote less than I need my conscience."

The 88-3 Senate vote on May 6, 1965 on the supplemental request was, indeed, overwhelming. Only Morse, Gruening and Nelson voted no and no amendments were offered during the debate.

When the President signed the bill he said that its meaning was clear: "We will do whatever must be done to insure the safety of South Vietnam from aggression. We will use our power with restraint and we will use it with all the wisdom that we can command. But we will use it." [81]

Congress' approval of the request also enabled the Executive to claim another legal precedent for the war, and the State Department's Legal Adviser, Leonard Meeker, took the position that by approving the $700 million request Congress had endorsed and approved of the President's actions and had further authorized the use of U.S. forces in Vietnam. (He also noted, however, that Congress expected further contact with the President if there was a "substantial change in the character of U.S. actions.") [82]

Dante Fascell, a member and subsequently chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, later characterized the passage of the bill:[83]

> While there was some probing and questions and considerable skepticism, nevertheless the $700 million request kind of whistled through. It was a situation where you've got to back

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[81] *Public Papers of the Presidents,* Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, p. 506.

[82] See *Department of State Bulletin,* "The Legality of United States Participation in the Defense of Viet-Nam," Mar. 28, 1966, p. 46. In a memorandum of law prepared on June 11, 1965, (Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces), Meeker stated, "The appropriation by Congress neither enlarged nor restricted the legal authority of the President to send combat troops to South Vietnam. The vote did express strong support for the policy which the President was pursuing to defend South Vietnam, with the expectation that a substantial change in character of U.S. actions would be preceded by the President's going back to Congress 'one way or another.' "

[83] CRS Interview with Dante Fascell, Feb. 23, 1979.

> up the men at the front; the kind of situation which became the linchpin for greater involvement in Vietnam. I think it is a clear case of where, starting with Eisenhower right up through Lyndon Johnson's supplemental, the Congress simply went along with the Executive.

Congressional debate and action on the $700 million request represented the beginning of a profound qualitative change in political posture and political rhetoric. Because a sizeable number of U.S. forces had already been sent to Vietnam, the argument about supporting the men at the front, which, as Fascell so aptly says, became the "linchpin for greater involvement in Vietnam," was used to justify approval of the supplemental appropriation. And once that happened, and the logic and the rhetoric came to be dominated by this instrumental and patriotic appeal, Congress was put in the position of having to say "yes" or take the political consequences.

Indirectly, therefore, Lyndon Johnson accomplished his goal of acting with the support of Congress by sending enough troops to Vietnam to cause this shift in rationale.

Moreover, the argument for supporting U.S. forces, which Johnson had succeeded in invoking, was probably the single most determinative factor in Congress' support throughout the war. Only when those troops were finally withdrawn in 1973 was Congress again in the position, as it had been prior to the deployment of U.S. forces in March-May 1965, of being able to consider the case effectively on its substantive merits.

The obverse political ploy: that those who dissented were contributing to miscalculations by the enemy, if not aiding and abetting the Communists, was not as successful in affecting congressional or public opinion and debate, but it, too, was a dominant argument in the debate on the $700 million request. Again, by planting the American flag in Vietnam, President Johnson had contributed directly toward arousing the kinds of patriotic sentiments which thereafter profoundly affected the ability of Congress to play a constructive role in the policymaking process.

In the short run, "rally-round-the-flag" appeals, combined with insinuations about loyalty, may have appeared to be a proper and fitting response to critics of the war. In the end, however, these tactics contributed to the disaffection of Members of Congress and private citizens, both with respect to the war, and in terms of Johnson's own standing and reputation.[84]

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[84] Through his efforts to discredit critics of the war, President Johnson may also have suffered psychologically from the growing opposition to him and to his policies as the war became increasingly unpopular. As Doris Kearns explains, when criticism mounted, Johnson, feeling under siege, ". . . retreated more and more into the world of his imagination, directing an increasing part of his energies to the task of protecting himself. . . . Increasingly, he endeavored to dismiss the content by discrediting the source." ". . . as the need to ward off threatening aspects of reality intensified, his reasoning tended toward rationalization, wishful thinking, denial, repression, and projection." "He . . . began to spin a vast web of accusations." "The worse the situation in Vietnam became, the more Johnson intruded his suspicions and his fears into every aspect of his daily work. Conversations with Cabinet members would begin with the question 'Why aren't you out there fighting against my enemies? Don't you realize that if they destroy me, they'll destroy you as well?' Discussions on legislation would be interrupted by diatribes against the 'critics.' Private luncheons and dinners would be dominated by complaints about 'the traitors.'

Continued

Not only did the increasing numbers of U.S. forces in Vietnam produce a change in political logic and rhetoric; it also led to changes in the policymaking process. As noted by Chester Cooper, who was on the NSC staff at the time these decisions were being made, "With the deployment of American combat troops, policymaking took on a new complexion. Up to this point the civilians, whether in the Department of State or Defense, played the leading roles in all policy discussions. . . . Now that the security of American forces was involved, military participation in virtually every facet of our Vietnam involvement was taken for granted." [85]

Peer de Silva, CIA station chief in Vietnam in 1964-1965, later commented on the impact of the increased role of the military:[86]

> We in CIA felt at the time that our appraisal of the situation in Vietnam was the right one and that our approach to the Vietcong problem was substantially correct. Conversely, we felt that MACV in appraising the situation in South Vietnam in purely military terms was off on the wrong track. However, the massive nature of MACV's resources and influence left CIA anguished and impotent. Though we never stopped trying, our efforts to change the course of action being taken by MACV were rather like trying to stop the inexorable advance of a glacier.

Among those members of the Foreign Relations Committee who were opposed to the war there was growing concern about the escalation of U.S. military operations and the apparent inability of the committee to influence the President. On May 13, Norvill Jones, a former legislative assistant to Senator Fulbright who had become a professional staff member of the Foreign Relations Committee, drafted and sent to Chief of Staff Marcy a letter for Fulbright to send to the President. "As you know," the draft letter stated, "the Committee has been under much pressure from a variety of sources to hold public hearings on our policies with respect to Vietnam. We have resisted this pressure, however, because we have not felt that such a course of action would be helpful to you. At the same time, it is our strong feeling that you may not have received adequate reports on the deep, but silent, misgivings of a large number of Senators." [87] Moreover, the draft letter continued, neither the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution nor Congress' action in passing the supplemental appropriations bill could be viewed as "approving in advance a widening of the war or of a change in the mission of our forces from training and assistance to fighting the war directly." "We respectfully ask," the draft letter concluded, "that the Congress be asked for additional authority either before large numbers

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"Johnson reacted to these perceived threats by moving his wagons into an even tighter circle, which had the effect of further foreclosing possible correctives to his fantasies and self-deception." "Under siege," Kearns says, "his operational style closed in and insulated him within the White House, where discussion was confined to those who offered no disagreement. . . . Screening out options, facts, and ideas, Lyndon Johnson's personality operated to distort the truth in much the same way as ideology works in a totalitarian society." Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), ch. 11. See also the trenchant analysis by Johnson's long-time assistant, George E. Reedy, Jr., in *The Twilight of the Presidency* (New York: New American Library, 1970).

[85] Cooper, *The Lost Crusade*, p. 275.

[86] Peer de Silva, *sub rosa*, p. 264.

[87] National Archives, RG 46, Marcy Chron File.

of troops are sent to Vietnam or before direct involvement of additional U.S. personnel in the fighting is authorized."

In a memorandum to Chairman Fulbright the next day (May 14) accompanying Jones' draft, Marcy said that the committee ". . . has not been able to bring its majority view to bear on the President," and that, "Discussions which might have taken place on the Floor of the Senate or in public hearings is taking place in the academic community and in the press." He proposed five possible courses of action for the committee:[88] First, the committee could send a letter to the President based on Jones' draft. "Six to ten Members of the Committee might be willing to sign such a letter," Marcy said. Second, the committee could promote Senate debate on Vietnam. Third, the committee could hold public hearings on Vietnam. Fourth, an amendment could be introduced to the National Security Act making the chairmen of the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees members of the National Security Council. This, he said, "would bring the role of the Senate in policy formulation to a quick head." Fifth, consideration could be given to the creation of a congressional committee on national security policy.

It is not known what further discussions or action, if any, there may have been on these proposals.

The Bombing Pause, May 1965

During the latter part of April and the first part of May 1965, pressure for additional U.S. military action continued to mount as intelligence estimates indicated that U.S. bombing of the north was not achieving the desired results. Both McCone, the outgoing Director of Central Intelligence, as was mentioned earlier,[89] and the new Director, Admiral Raborn, took the position that the existing level of bombing was not severe enough to cause the Communists to want to negotiate, but that heavier bombing, together with the U.S. troop deployments which the President had approved after the April 20 Honolulu Conference, might have that effect. Taylor generally agreed with this assessment.[90]

In a letter to the President on April 28 in which he elaborated on his April 2 memorandum, McCone said:[91]

> . . . I feel that we must conduct our bombing attacks in a manner that will begin to hurt North Vietnam badly enough to cause the Hanoi regime to seek a political way out through negotiation rather than expose their economy to increasingly serious levels of destruction. By limiting our attacks to targets

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[88] Same location.

[89] See p. 200.

[90] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 363-365. An assessment on May 3, 1965 by the U.S. Mission in Saigon of probable courses of action by the Communists in the following three months found that, "From the DRV viewpoint, outlook is probably still favorable despite air strikes on North. Although their general transportation systems in North have been significantly damaged, thus somewhat reducing their infiltration capability, Hanoi may calculate it can accept level of damage being inflicted as reasonable price to pay for chance of victory in South." In the South, the Mission predicted that the most likely course of action was that the Communists would continue to expand military action to enlarge their area of control and to demoralize the people and the government. Such an effort would probably occur during the rainy season (May-October) in the highlands and in the coastal provinces. U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 3632, May 4, 1965.

[91] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

> like bridges, military installations and lines of communication, in effect we signal to the Communists that our determination to win is significantly modified by our fear of widening the war.
>
> In these circumstances the Communists are likely to feel they can afford to accept a considerable amount of bomb damage while they improve their air defenses and step up their insurgency in South Vietnam. If they take this line of action, in the next few months they can present us with an ever-increasing guerrilla war against the reinforced Viet Cong in terrain and circumstances favorable to the Communists.
>
> If this situation develops and lasts several months or more, I feel world opinion will turn against us, Communist propaganda will become increasingly effective, and indeed domestic support of our policy may erode.
>
> I therefore urge that as we deploy additional troops [as recommended in McNamara's report on April 21], which I believe necessary, we concurrently hit the north harder and inflict greater damage. In my opinion, we should strike their petroleum supplies, electric power installations, and air defense installations (including the SAM sites which are now being built). I do not think we have to fear taking on the MIG's, which after all the ChiNats [Chinese Nationalists] defeated in 1958 with F-86's and Sidewinders [air-to-air missiles].
>
> I am not talking about bombing centers of population or killing innocent people, though there will of course be some casualties. I am proposing to "tighten the tourniquet" on North Vietnam so as to make the Communists pause to weigh the losses they are taking against their prospects for gains. We should make it hard for the Viet Cong to win in the south and simultaneously hard for Hanoi to endure our attacks in the north.

McCone concluded:

> I believe this course of action holds out the greatest promise we can hope for in our effort to attain our ultimate objective of finding a political solution to the Vietnam problem. This view follows logically, it seems to me, from our National Intelligence Estimate of 18 February 1965, which concludes that the Hanoi regime would be more likely than not to make an effort to "secure a respite" by some political move when and if, but not before, a sustained U.S. program of air attacks is damaging important economic or military assets in North Vietnam.

In his letter to the President on May 8, Admiral Raborn said he agreed with McCone that the U.S. should exert greater military pressure on North Vietnam.[92] Raborn also agreed with McCone that this could be done gradually, rather than in a "sudden and dramatic" manner.

"If we are not willing to do this [increase bombing]," Raborn said, "I question seriously whether it is wise to become more deeply involved in ground operations. . . . If we only make it hard for the enemy in the South, we are not bringing additional pressure to bear on his commander in the North. Hanoi, in my view, is not likely to engage in meaningful discussions at any time in coming months, if U.S. air attacks have not yet begun to damage or destroy its principal economic and military targets, which are overwhelmingly in the northern portion of North Vietnam, beyond the scope of our present strikes." Except for the Department of State, he added, the intelligence community agreed that if these targets were destroyed, North Vietnam "would be more likely than not to seek a respite by some political move." "I feel," Raborn said, "we must hit their petroleum supplies and their electric power installations. We should knock out their air defense installations, including any surface-to-air missile sites we can find under construction or completed. We should not avoid their MIG fighters, but go after them."

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[92] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

Raborn said that the strengthening of U.S. ground forces was necessary, and would help to block the Communists, but would not force the Communists to seek a respite. "The French experience may unduly influence my judgment," he said, but unless bombing was increased, "we will in effect be pressing the advantage on the ground where our capabilities enjoy the least comparative advantage. In these circumstances, I am concerned that we will find ourselves pinned down, with little choice left among possible subsequent courses of action: i.e., disengagement at very high cost, or broadening the conflict in quantum jumps."

Raborn concluded his letter by emphasizing that the U.S. should not become ". . . preoccupied with military action and lose sight of the basically political aspect of the war. In the final analysis, it can only be won at the SVN hamlet level."

In his letter, Raborn also suggested that it would be useful to consider a bombing pause "to test the Communist intentions and to exploit any differences on their side."

The President, as well as Rusk and McNamara, was not inclined to agree to a bombing pause, in part because it might appear to be a concession to critics of the war, but largely because he thought the Communists would not respond favorably and would interpret it as a sign of U.S. weakness and indecision. In early May 1965 he decided to do so, however, for domestic political reasons, as well as to test the Communists' intentions, demonstrate the U.S. commitment to negotiations, and justify higher levels of U.S. military action if the Communists did not respond favorably. In a cable to Taylor on May 10, the President said, among other things, that the pause would, ". . . begin to clear a path either toward restoration of peace or toward increased military actions, depending upon the reaction of the Communists. We have amply demonstrated our determination and our commitment in the last two months, and I now wish to gain some flexibility."[93]

Some months later, during a meeting in December 1965 with the President prior to announcing another bombing pause, McNamara commented: "Our first pause [May 1965] was a propaganda effort." [94]

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[93] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 366, Washington to Saigon 2553, May 10, 1965. When the *Pentagon Papers* were published, the section of the original text which contained the analysis of U.S. negotiating efforts was not published. Subsequently it was released and has been published in a volume edited by George C. Herring. See *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War: The Negotiating Volumes of the Pentagon Papers* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1983). For the sections on the May 1965 bombing pause, see pp. 45-130.

The bombing pause, codenamed Project MAYFLOWER, which was not publicly announced, began on May 12, 1965. On the day before the pause began, the Department of State directed Foy Kohler, U.S. Ambassador to the U.S.S.R., to deliver the following message to the North Vietnamese Ambassador in Moscow:[95]

> In this decision [the bombing pause] the United States Government has taken account of repeated suggestions from various quarters, including public statements by Hanoi representatives, that there can be no progress toward peace while there are air attacks on North Viet-Nam. The United States Government remains convinced that the underlying cause of trouble in Southeast Asia is armed action against the people and Government of South Vietnam by forces whose actions can be decisively affected from North Vietnam. The United States will be very watchful to see whether in this period of pause there are significant reductions in such armed actions by such forces. The United States must emphasize that the road toward the end of armed attacks against the people and Government of Vietnam is the only road which will permit the Government of Vietnam and the Government of the United States to bring a permanent end to their air attacks on North Vietnam.
>
> In taking this action the United States is well aware of the risk that a temporary suspension of these air attacks may be misunderstood as an indication of weakness, and it is therefore necessary for me to point out that if this pause should be misunderstood in this fashion, by any party, it would be necessary to demonstrate more clearly than ever, after the pause ended, that the United States is determined not to accept aggression

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[94] Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File. In the Johnson Library, Warnke Papers, McNaughton File, there is the following undated and unsigned statement entitled, "Criticism of the Initiative by the 'Unsympathetic,' " which apparently was prepared in late April-early May 1965 for McNaughton by someone in his office:

"1. The US is trying to get concession from the VC by turning on and off bombing of the *DRV*, an innocent party. There is no more basis for this new US objective than there was for starting bombing in the first place. The fundamental point is that the VC are independent of the DRV, that the war is a civil war, that the DRV cannot compel the VC to stop the war in SVN in exchange for the US halt in bombing.

"2. The US proposal contemplates that the GVN will continue military operations in SVN. This means that the US is asking 'a horse for a rabbit'—the US is expecting the DRV/VC to halt all of their activities in exchange for a cessation of only one-half of the US/GVN activities. Why should the VC give up land and people they hold in SVN (some for 25 years) in exchange for cessation of bombings in the DRV? This request is patently unfair. What would be fair is a total cessation of *all* hostilities in both the DRV and SVN, a recognition of the existing power relationships of the contending parties and the immediate start of 'unconditional discussions' (quoting President) on that basis between the GVN and the NLF/VC. These are the two parties that truly represent the South Vietnamese people's interests, and they should reach an accommodation among themselves.

"3. The real reason the US is stopping the bombings is that the bombing policy is bankrupt and always has been. It has not succeeded in compelling discussions; it has not broken the DRV/VC will (it has really strengthened their will); it has united the Soviets and Chicoms; it has alienated world opinion. The bombing pause is a patent confession of failure of a bad idea.

"4. The US/GVN gave too short a period of time before resuming bombing for the initiative to work. They did not give DRV/VC a reasonable chance to respond, for cooler heads to prevail, or for discussions to begin.

"5. The conclusion is inescapable that this is a grandstand play—a piece of 'crisis management' for the world audience—intended to demonstrate Johnson's statesmanlike magnanimity and reasonableness, intended to fail, and intended to be followed, 'regretfully, but unavoidably' with air strikes against DRV that are less justifiable and put greater pressure on the Chinese and the Soviets to enter the war than anything we have seen so far."

[95] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Washington to Saigon, May 11, 1965.

> without reply in Vietnam. Moreover, the United States must point out that the decision to end air attacks for this limited trial period is one which it must be free to reverse if at any time in the coming days there should be actions by the other side in Vietnam which required immediate reply.
>
> But my Government is very hopeful that there will be no such misunderstanding and that this first pause in the air attacks may meet with a response which will permit further and more extended suspension of this form of military action in the expectation of equally constructive actions by the other side in the future.

The North Vietnamese Ambassador refused to see Kohler, who then had the message delivered in writing to the North Vietnamese Embassy in Moscow. The next day it was returned unopened to the U.S. Embassy in a plain envelope.[96]

On May 18, the U.S. resumed the bombing of North Vietnam. The decision was made at a meeting of the NSC on May 16 from 6:45 p.m. to about 8:40 p.m. attended by the President, Rusk, Ball, W. Averell Harriman (Ambassador at Large, previously Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East), McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Raborn, Helms, as well as Dean Acheson and Abe Fortas. Also present were Smith and Valenti from the NSC and White House staffs. Notes of the meeting help to explain the factors involved in the pause as well as the administration's plans after the resumption of bombing.[97] They confirm the fact that domestic political factors, particularly pressure from the press and from Senators Fulbright and Mansfield, were probably the overriding consideration in the decision to pause, while other domestic interests prompted early resumption.

According to the notes of the meeting, the President said: "My judgment is the public has never wanted us to stop the bombing. We have stopped in deference to Mansfield and Fulbright, but we don't want to do it too long else we lose our base of support." "I'm afraid if we play along with this group, we will wind up with no one on our side. We tried out their notions and got no results."

"To me," the President said, "it's a pure question of what happens in this country. If we hold off this bombing longer, people are going to say 'What in the world is happening.' We can inform Mansfield . . . the *NY Times,* but we will never satisfy the *Times*. . . . I would say to Mansfield, Kennedy, Fulbright that we notified the other people—and for six days we have held off bombing. Nothing happened. We had no illusions that anything would happen. But we were willing to be surprised. We are anxious to pursue every diplomatic adventure, to get peace. But we can't throw our gun away." He added, "Now Rusk will talk to Fulbright and Mansfield . . . I think you ought to show the leaders we are open and receptive to ideas—but nothing happened on this particular idea [the pause]."

At one point during these comments, McNamara said: "We ought to give this [information on the results of the pause] out on background [i.e., released to the press without attribution as to its source]. Mansfield ought to know Hanoi spit in our face."

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[96] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, pp. 369-377, and Thies, *When Governments Collide*, pp. 95-96.

[97] Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File. These notes, taken by Jack Valenti, have been excised in part.

On the day the U.S. resumed bombing, Mai Van Bo, the senior North Vietnamese diplomat in Paris, talked with the Director of Asian Affairs in the French Foreign Office, Etienne Manac'h, who then reported to U.S. officials in Paris that Bo had said that North Vietnam's Four Points [98] were not prior conditions to negotiations but were "working principles for a negotiation." Another French official, however, reported that Bo had said that recognition of the Four Points would create "favorable conditions" for a settlement and would "'open' possibility" of another Geneva conference.[99] The U.S. thanked the French for the information and asked to be kept informed.

The reaction in the State Department according to William Bundy was that the North Vietnamese were speaking "in riddles," using "carefully chosen and nuanced words and phrases," [100] and after "reading and re-reading" the report on Mai Van Bo's statements, Bundy and others in the Department concluded that he had not modified the position taken by the North Vietnamese when the Four Points were first issued, namely, that they must be accepted in principle ("recognized") before talks could begin.

An effort was made, however, to explore the matter further. On May 25, 1965, Chester Cooper sent a memorandum to the President, at his request, outlining a plan of action if the U.S. were to get "reliable indications" of the willingness of the North Vietnamese "to talk without preconditions." [101] He proposed that another bombing pause should be scheduled and the U.S. should tell the North Vietnamese that it was prepared to enter into a "quiet, bilateral exploratory discussion . . . without preconditions" in which the Four Points, as well as certain U.S. positions, would "form part of the basis for discussion." If, after a pause of several days, there had been no response, the U.S. would resume bombing.

He also proposed that a small group should be established in the U.S. Government ". . . to manage all aspects of our diplomatic-political approach as a full-time highest priority task. The group should be selected with a view that it will provide the nucleus for the U.S. negotiating team. Immediate study should be given to the preparation of a U.S. negotiating track taking into account Hanoi's four points as recently put forward as well as our own position and objectives." [102]

Cooper also noted that the visit to North Vietnam on May 31 by J. Blair Seaborn, the Canadian member of the International Control Commission, could be used for further exploration of these points. This was done. Without telling him about the Mai Van Bo contact, Seaborn was asked, if the North Vietnamese raised the subject of the Four Points, to inquire whether they considered those to be prior conditions to negotiations.[103] After Seaborn saw the North Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Nguyen Duy Trinh, on June 3, the U.S. Mission in Saigon reported in a cable to Washington on June 7 that Seaborn felt the North Vietnamese were, ". . . not now interested in any negotiations. . . . Trinh followed standard line that US offer of unconditional discussions was 'deceitful' since US continued build-up in South Vietnam and bombing of North." Asked by Seaborn whether the Four Points were prior conditions, Trinh "remained deliberately vague and gave no clear answers." [104]

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[98] See p. 217 above.

[99] XYZ Chronology, p. 1, in Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War,* p. 90. See also the discussion in Thies, *When Governments Collide,* pp. 97-99.

[100] Bundy MS., ch. 24, p. 20.

[101] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, "A Diplomatic-Political Track for Vietnam."

[102] Earlier, in a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy on April 24 ("The DRV Terms and Possible U.S. Counter Proposals") Cooper and Thomson had commented on each of the Four Points, and had concluded that, with changes, they could be used as the basis for a "negotiating dialogue." The memorandum is still classified.

On June 14, Mai Van Bo again called on Manac'h, who told him that the Americans were "deeply interested" in Bo's message of May 18, but, when asked, he refused to give Bo the name of the U.S. diplomat with whom he had talked.[105]

On June 3, in an executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Claiborne Pell asked Secretary Rusk whether the U.S. had been contacted by the North Vietnamese just prior to the resumption of bombing with a message indicating their possible interest in negotiations. Rusk, who was not prepared for the question—the State Department did not know that Pell had learned of the incident—avoided a direct answer, but, when pressed by Pell he said that the contact did not represent "any slightest degree of change from any public position that they have taken, and no indication that they were interested in a serious discussion of bringing this matter to a close." [106] Pell responded that to ascertain whether or not it represented a change would "require a conversation."

"Happily," William Bundy said in a letter on June 9 to Charles E. Bohlen, U.S. Ambassador to France, "he [Pell] did not name specifics, . . . nor did he pursue the matter." [107]

Bundy told Bohlen that after the hearing he had talked to Pell, who told him that he had obtained the information from his friend and former diplomatic colleague [name excised from the letter]. (Pell had been in the Foreign Service before being elected to the Senate.) Bundy said that he told Pell the whole story, and that Pell, "readily agreed that it was vital to continue to protect the confidence of the [word excised] channel, and I have little doubt that he will hold the matter to himself. In short, the genie is still in the bottle for now."

Bundy added that some thought was being given to contacting Bo, but that, "Our initial reaction is to lie low. The overwhelming indications, from Seaborn's conversation, from his reading of the atmosphere in Hanoi (including the universal judgments of all the diplomats there), from the propaganda indications, and above all from the way Hanoi must be weighing the bad turn of events in the South, is that Hanoi is not about to pick us up on anything, and that there is no possible mileage in a further approach that would not be overwhelmingly outweighed by the danger of such an approach being misinterpreted or, worst of all, leaking in some fashion to Saigon—where it could well be the real kiss of death. However deep the bind we are in, I don't think this is the way out for the present." "My total impression is that it was a cute diplomatic maneuver designed to muddy the waters. . . ."

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[103] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Washington to Saigon 2718, May 27, 1965, and Herring, p. 42, from p. 27 of VI.C.1., "The Seaborn Mission to Hanoi, June 1964-June 1965."

[104] Herring, p. 44, from p. 29 of VI.C.1.

[105] *Ibid.*, p. 2 of XYZ Chronology.

[106] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, unpublished executive session transcript, June 3, 1965. Rusk denied that the contact had been made before the end of the bombing pause, but said he would check on the matter. The following day (June 4), William Bundy sent Rusk a note explaining the ways in which the contact had been made and how it had been interpreted, as well as whether the contact was made before the U.S. resumed bombing. This note is still classified, as are several cables on the subject between Washington and the U.S. Embassies in Paris and Saigon.

[107] A copy of this letter is in the CMH files.

At some point in late June-early July 1965, Pell, who was deeply concerned about the escalation of the war, told Bundy that he was going to a North Atlantic Parliamentarian's meeting in Paris in mid-July, and while there he could contact Mai Van Bo if that would be useful. After conferring with Rusk, Bundy told Pell that this would not be advisable.[108] (At that time, as will be seen, a small group headed by Bundy was considering possible covert contacts with North Vietnamese diplomats in third countries, including Mai Van Bo, and at the end of July a highly secret covert contact was established with Bo.)

The Acheson-Ball Plan

The notes of the May 16, 1965 meeting also indicate that the "Acheson-Ball plan" (also called the "Acheson-Cutler plan"), which had been developed after the meeting on April 21, was being discussed by policymakers, even though, as Ball said later, "I would not assume that anyone but Acheson and I were very enthusiastic about the plan. I think Dean Rusk saw some slight merit to it, but the President and Secretary McNamara were primarily preoccupied with operational problems." Ball added: "I had little confidence in the plan at the time, but as I then saw it, anything was worth trying." [109]

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[108] Same location, note from William Bundy to the Secretary, July 8, 1965.

[109] Letter to CRS from George Ball, Apr. 3, 1984.

According to Allen Whiting, who was the State Department's Director of Intelligence for East Asia at the time (May 1965),

"As early as May 1964 the Joint Chiefs of Staff worked up a target list for the bombing of North Vietnam. Acting at the direction of the Secretary of Defense, they mapped out a wide range of choice, according to the available weaponry and the desired objectives. To be sure, intelligence was imperfect; results did not always accord with plans. Nonetheless it would be hard to fault the Department of Defense for not being ready to do whatever was asked of it, on relatively short notice, and with unprecedented limitations in terms of operational freedom in the field.

"By contrast, not before May 1965 did the Department of State authorize preparation of a political plan [the Acheson-Ball plan] for ending the war on anything other than simple submission by Hanoi to Washington's will. Even then this initial group was without staff, restricted in numbers, and operated under such secrecy as to make its short-lived existence of little value. Prior to this time it was anathema for any person or paper to propose ending the war on a compromise basis which might contain sufficient interest for the communists as to induce them to negotiate rather than fight to a finish. President Johnson's celebrated pledge to 'talk anytime, anywhere' was appropriate public rhetoric in the spring of 1965. But as bombing of the North increased with no visible diminution of enemy will, attention at State focused primarily on how to ward off various peace messengers anxious to act as go-betweens, while preparing for the political context and consequences of massive troop deployments to the South. In short, the President had a multitude of military choices, carefully planned and neatly packaged. He had virtually no political choice except to continue the war until Hanoi quit; at least no such choice was forthcoming from the department presumably responsible for designing it." Whiting, "Bureaucratic Quicksand: The U.S. in Vietnam," a paper delivered at the 1970 meeting of the American Political Science Association.

The Acheson-Ball plan, as set forth in a memorandum by Ball on May 13 for the meeting on May 16, "A Plan for a Political Resolution in South Viet-Nam," called for the Government of South Viet-nam to initiate a "Program for Social and Political Reconstruction" involving five elements:[110]

(1) An offer of amnesty to all Viet Cong adherents who cease fighting;

(2) A phased schedule for establishing a Constitutional Government based on an electoral process in which all peaceful citizens, including peaceful Viet Cong adherents, would take part;

(3) Pending the local elections, the Government would seek to establish its presence with a minimum of disruption to local administrative arrangements currently acceptable to the local populace;

(4) The Government would immediately earmark economic and social reconstruction programs with special emphasis on education, medical care, the provision of seeds and fertilizers, land tenure reform and debt cancellations or moratoria;

(5) The Prime Minister would announce he had arranged for a withdrawal of foreign troops, to begin when the insurgency stops and the Government has effectively extended its authority throughout the country.

The memorandum also noted with regard to point (1), that, "Since many of the Viet Cong adherents cannot be identified, amnesty in practice might consist merely of a halt in individual military participation and a return to civilian life by peasants who would never concede their past Viet Cong association."

In conjunction with the announcement of this plan for social and political reconstruction, Acheson and Ball also proposed announcing that offensive military operations by the U.S. and South Vietnam would be suspended temporarily in order to allow the plan to be considered and put into effect. Such a pause would, "(1) be limited in time; and (2) apply only to offensive military operations such as target bombing in North Viet-Nam and search-and-kill operations in the South. It would *not* include suspension of the sea blockade, the bombing of supply routes in Laos, or full response to any Viet Cong incidents in South Viet-Nam." (emphasis in original) Offensive operations would be resumed "if the [reconstruction] program meets substantial Viet Cong resistance."

The purpose of the Acheson-Ball plan, the memorandum stated, was to achieve U.S. objectives in South Vietnam "by shifting the struggle from the military to the political arena" before there was further escalation of the conflict. The plan would also have "substantial propaganda value both in South Viet-Nam and throughout the world," whether or not it was actually put into effect.

"Each side," the memorandum continued, "may find advantage in moving the conflict from the military to the political arena," but only if the plan enabled "each side to conclude that it has substantially as good a chance of achieving its long-range goals in the political arena as by continuing military actions."

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[110] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers). In the same location is an earlier document, a memorandum to Ball from Acheson, "What Are We Seeking in These Discussions?" Apr. 28, 1965, which, as one facet of the effort to move from a military to a political response, discussed the use of a unilateral pause in bombing as a way of testing the interest of the Communists in avoiding a larger war. On May 8, Ball sent the President a memorandum, "Tentative Plan for a Settlement in Vietnam," Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

For the United States, which "cannot accept a Viet Cong victory," further military involvement, the memorandum stated, "may lead to a gradual escalation of the conflict and a progressively larger involvement of both the Chinese Communists and the Soviet Union." For their part, the North Vietnamese might view it as a way by which to achieve their objectives without further military sacrifices. "The Vietnamese Communists have repeatedly shown their willingness to work within long time spans. While they would be prepared to absorb enormous punishment before abandoning the purpose they have sought for four decades, they might well be prepared to wait a few years longer to achieve that purpose—sustained by the conviction that the United States would lose interest in South Viet-Nam, that they could subvert any government that could be established in that country, and that over the long pull Communist success was inevitable."

If the plan were put into effect, the memorandum concluded, it might be ten years or more before its long-term results would be apparent, ". . . but ten years is a long time in the present-day world. Within the next decade new elements could enter the equation that would fundamentally change the whole situation."

In a supporting memorandum on how the proposed plan could be carried out, Ball stated:[111]

> After their acquiescence in the general outlines of the Plan has been obtained, the Vietnamese should be invited to appoint members to a small United States-Vietnamese working committee which, meeting in great secrecy, would work around-the-clock to perfect detailed elements of the Plan and set up a phased schedule for its actual execution. During this consultation process, the United States would firmly (but diplomatically,) resist significant changes in the Plan's essential elements but would give a favorable hearing to Vietnamese suggestions regarding points of detail or adaptations dictated by local conditions in various parts of Viet-Nam. Our objective would be to preserve the Plan's basic United States-devised structure, yet have it emerge from the joint United States-Vietnamese review as something the Vietnamese would consider as their own and be willing to present to the world and execute as such.

The supporting memorandum added that it would be difficult, however, to get the cooperation of the South Vietnamese because of their fear of U.S. disengagement, and that the military aspects of the plan should be downplayed. ". . . our approach to the Vietnamese will have to be a trifle disingenuous if it is to have any chance of succeeding."

At the meeting with the President on May 16, the Acheson-Ball plan was presented by Acheson, and there was intermittent discussion. Rusk commented, "We can start bombing again [the bombing halt was still in effect]—then get the Acheson-Ball plan all worked out. It will be launched by Quat." Rusk suggested that Taylor's opinion should be requested, and the President agreed.[112]

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[111] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, "The Mechanics of Executing the Proposed 'Plan for a Political Resolution in South Viet-Nam,' " unsigned and undated.

The reply on May 20 from Taylor and U. Alexis Johnson, following a quick trip to Saigon by Ball's assistant, Thomas Ehrlich, to discuss it with them, was that the Acheson-Ball plan posed a number of problems,[113] most importantly that the Communists would not consider it to their advantage to give up the armed struggle unless by doing so they could "fatten the South Vietnamese sheep for the eventual enjoyment of North Vietnamese wolves. . . ." As for the reconstruction plan itself, they said that there were only 10 provinces in which such a program could have a good chance of success, whereas in 22 provinces the conditions were "spotty," and "virtually impossible" in the other 12. This factor, together with the poor performance of the South Vietnamese Government, gave "little reason to hope that a newly promulgated program for social and political reconstruction will convince any large number of Vietnamese, north or south, that a new era is at hand. . . ."

As for allowing Communist defectors to participate in politics, Taylor and U. Alexis Johnson expressed concern that if "unreformed Viet Cong" were allowed to vote and run for office the U.S. "would appear to be tacitly encouraging the eventual creation of the type of coalition government which, on past occasions, we have publicly equated to communization of South Viet-Nam."

They also questioned whether the proposed plan would restrain North Vietnamese infiltration into the South or would substantially reduce the number of armed Communists in the South.

Based on these considerations, Taylor and Johnson concluded:

> We can see little if anything in this plan which would appeal to the GVN. Local leaders will be quick to see the danger of a coalition government and of the failure to assure the end of infiltration and to liquidate the Viet Cong military threat within South Viet-Nam. If we mention U.S. withdrawal, they will shy even more. In its present form, it is unlikely that the GVN would accept the plan without a great deal of unpleasant armtwisting on the part of the Americans—perhaps not then. Such pressure tactics could only be applied at a very substantial sacrifice of the present good relations existing between GVN and USG. If the GVN yielded to this pressure, it is entirely possible that a military-Catholic coalition would overturn the government.

Taylor and U. Alexis Johnson also summarized their views on the possibility of a political settlement:[114]

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[112] In a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy on May 20, 1965 (same location), Chester Cooper said he was convinced that the Communists were getting ready to set up a provisional government for South Vietnam, which they would establish in one of the northern provinces of the country, and which would then be recognized by North Vietnam and other Communist countries as well as by various non-Communist countries. If this were to happen, he said, it would be difficult to implement the Acheson-Ball plan, and it was important, therefore, "if we meet with any encouragement in Saigon," to get the President's approval and put the program into effect as soon as possible.

[113] Same location, unsigned memorandum, "Questions and Comments Relating to 'A Plan for a Political Resolution in South Viet-Nam,' " May 20, 1965.

[114] Same location, unsigned memorandum, "Fundamental Factors in a Political Settlement in South Vietnam," May 20, 1965.

> No amount of bombing of the North is in itself going to persuade the DRV/VC to abandon their strategy. They can be persuaded to abandon it only if they are convinced that the trend of events in the South is against them and the factors cited above [a coalition government, followed by a takeover] are not panning out. They are not yet convinced that this is the case.
>
> The VC will never really disband their armed forces in South Vietnam until they are fully in control of the government. They might as a ruse "play dead" without giving up their arms—but that is all. By the same token no extended cease fire is practical.
>
> To the degree that we or the GVN seem anxious to negotiate from what the DRV/VC still estimate is a position of weakness on our side we encourage the DRV/VC to continue their present course. To the degree that we can impart to the DRV/VC a sense of calm confidence and willingness indefinitely to pursue our present course, the DRV/VC will be encouraged to look for ways out.

On May 25, Ball sent a cable to Taylor and Johnson replying to the doubts they had expressed in which he said, among other things, that the plan would not prevent infiltration from the north or "dismantle" the Communist military apparatus in the south, but that it would reduce the insurgency to the point where it could be controlled by the South Vietnamese without large numbers of U.S. forces.[115] As for the danger of a coalition government, Ball said that this was not likely. "Rather, we would envisage a strong executive branch in which former Viet Cong would not participate, together with a legislature of limited power that might contain a minority of *former* Viet Cong." (emphasis in original) He added: "The formula proposed in the plan admittedly carries certain political and electoral risks with it, but these appear to be about the minimum concessions that would have to be made to the other side if the plan were to have any chance of success."

While these efforts were being made by Ball, some members of the Foreign Relations Committee were continuing to express interest in a similar approach. In an executive session hearing on May 19, 1965 with Henry Cabot Lodge, former U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, who had recently returned from a trip to the region (April 19-May 1) to survey the situation at the request of the President (as was mentioned earlier, he had been made a special consultant to the President on February 26, and by the time of his trip he had agreed to be appointed to succeed Taylor as Ambassador), there was a long discussion of the need for strengthening political and psychological programs aimed at making the South Vietnamese more resistant to the Communists.[116] Lodge stressed his

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[115] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Washington to Saigon 2685, May 25, 1965.

[116] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, unpublished executive session transcript, May 19, 1965.

These were Lodge's recommendations to the President (U.S. Department of State, Lot File 72 D 207, copy of unsigned and undated memorandum on which is handwritten: "Lodge Recommendations"):

"1. As regards public relations, there should be a drum-fire of glossy prints and crisp concrete copy on Viet Cong misdeeds and on Vietnamese accomplishments. . . .

Continued

feeling that the problem was a "politico-military problem," and said, "If our political effort were as far along as our military effort, we would be in very good shape." One of the problems in trying to organize the Vietnamese politically, Lodge added, was that ". . . the local people have actually to do it. It is the American that has to teach them and organize them and so on. There undoubtedly was some Russian one day who instructed Mao Tse-tung."

Fulbright, referring to an informal January 1965 meeting of several members of the committee at which Lansdale and others discussed this subject,[117] agreed with Lodge, and told him, "I hope you have persuaded the executive. I was distinctly under the impression that they did not have the realization as to where the major problem is. They thoroughly understand the military, and we have, God knows, put in enough planes and things like that. I still do not believe they understand the point you are making about the need for grass roots political organization."

"2. Policy toward SEATO should be restudied. Using it as the basis for an international consortium on Viet-Nam may have possibilities.

"3. Intensive study should be given to the idea of making the Trust Territories of the Pacific (population 89,000) into a part of the State of Hawaii. While there are some obvious difficulties, such action would promptly put the United States into the Pacific in a way which even [President Achmed] Sukarno, [Prince Norodom] Sihanouk and the Viet Cong could not misunderstand. Also our failure to incorporate this territory might result in its going to somebody else. The world is filling up and there is not much vacant land left.

"4. Consideration should be given to rewarding such a staunch ally as Korea by enabling it to gain economic benefits deriving from the Viet-Nam situation. . . .

"5. That General Humphries [Brig. Gen. James W. Humphreys, Jr., U.S. Air Force, chief of Public Health in USOM]—if he is able as he is said to be—be induced to take charge of this problem [medical care] at once under USOM and push the biggest program that conditions permit. . . .

"6. A 'GI bill of rights' for Vietnamese soldiers and benefits for their families should be put into effect.

"7. An intensive study be given to the merits of making air conditioners, fish refrigerators and small diesel engines available.

"8. On the matter of the Marines and the Vietnamese army engaging in raids, I learned that 'deep patrolling' has already begun, which is not quite the same thing.

"9. That the building of a moderately priced new Embassy be pressed. Having made the announcement it looks weak not to go ahead with it.

"10. You asked: 'Are we getting enough out of the CIA?' I do not feel that we are. But in the time which I had I was unable to find added ways of using these CIA men, many of whom are of truly impressive ability. This too should be further explored.

"11. We should concentrate on the two or three most vital programs, which he (Quat) is capable of doing and do whatever we can do along [*sic*—probably should be 'alone'].

"12. The Ambassador (and the Deputy Ambassador in his absence) is still the only person with power to press hard for integration and coordination—the only generalist in a crowd of specialists. There is an excellent career diplomat who is 'executive secretary of the U.S. Mission Council,' but this is not at all the same thing as having a constantly pressing coordinator of presidential-appointee calibre with standing and prestige of his own in Washington. Some integration has been achieved in the Hop Tac program, but a first class coordinator could really forge the new tool which we need to overcome Communist subversion-terrorism. Recommendation: That such a coordinator be put to work under the Ambassador.

"13. That intensive study be given to the practicality of the United States providing funds to help the Vietnamese Government buy land and distribute it to the farmers. This would be expensive, but it would be enormously effective in winning over the people and would be a body blow to the Viet Cong.

"14. That some one close to you appeal to the owners of these (slapstick) films to be reasonable and let us have them for Viet-Nam at a fair price."

(Lodge apparently believed that "slapstick" films [comedy and western] could be beneficial in providing entertainment for the South Vietnamese as well as in helping them to gain some appreciation of the lighter side of American life.)

For a progress report on actions being taken to implement these recommendations, which apparently were approved by the President, see, in the same location, the memorandum from Leonard Unger to Chester Cooper, "Ambassador Lodge's Recommendations," June 24, 1965.

[117] For further details on the January 1965 meeting, see pt. II of this study, pp. 398-399.

This subject came up again on the evening of May 27 at an off-the-record meeting of congressional leaders with the President which had been called for the purpose of briefing the leaders on several current foreign policy problems, especially the Dominican Republic and Vietnam.[118]

According to hand-written notes taken by McGeorge Bundy,[119] the only notes which appear to have been kept, Fulbright expressed concern about further bombing of North Vietnam—about "unnecessary and dangerous escalation." The President, in turn, was "firm" with him on the need for bombing. Fulbright then referred to Lodge's view of the need to emphasize economic and political aspects, and said he was prepared, if this were the emphasis, to say, "We're here to stay." The President responded that he was "trying to do everything Lodge says." Referring to problems in implementing the Acheson (Ball-Acheson) plan, he said he was trying "to get the political traces just as tight as military."

According to the notes, "President put the hook to Fulbright to get a unified speech." "No one answers the Russians," he said, "and the Soviet propaganda apparat is getting at all sorts of people on our side, and we don't answer. We need people to know the facts."

Dissent Increases

Although the President may have tried to ignore the growing opposition to U.S. policy in Vietnam among certain elements of the public,[120] by the middle of April 1965 the administration had begun to take steps to counter the criticism, especially from colleges and universities. White House aides, especially Valenti and Cooper, organized "Target: College Campus," which, among other things arranged for speakers from the Government, both the executive branch and Congress, to appear on college campuses, and for professors and students to be brought to Washington at Government expense for briefings.[121] In a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy on April 23, Valenti said that the President had "signed on to" the idea. "He agrees that this is an arena into which we pour our best young troops, particularly those folks who have been to Vietnam and who speak with some visible authority about their facts." [122]

To further this enterprise, Valenti and Cooper arranged with the American Friends of Vietnam (AFV), a group of prominent Americans who supported South Vietnam, and its chairman, Wesley Fishel, a professor at Michigan State University who had long been associated with the U.S. Government's role in Vietnam,[123] to take the lead in establishing programs for college campuses as well as a broad public information program. After the Bureau of the Budget told Cooper that government funds could not be used, Valenti contacted one of President Johnson's financial supporters, Sidney Weinburg, a New York financier, for help in raising the necessary money. Cooper arranged for the State Department to begin sending to the AFV some of the requests it was receiving for speakers on Vietnam, and he met with Fishel and an officer from the U.S. Army's Historical Evaluation and Research Organization to develop plans for having that office assist, without charge, with the publication of a new AFV monthly newsletter on Vietnam.[124]

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[118] Those invited included the elected leadership—McCormack, Albert, Boggs, Ford, Arends, and Mansfield, Russell, Long, Dirksen, Kuchel and Hickenlooper, as well as the chairmen of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees—Mahon and Hayden, the chairman and ranking Republican of the House Armed Services Committee—Rivers and Bates, and the chairman and second-ranking Republican (Hickenlooper, the ranking Republican, was included as an elected leader)—Fulbright and Aiken. Apparently, no one was invited from the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

[119] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy.

[120] For a general treatment of the question of President Johnson's reaction to such opposition, see DeBenedetti, "Lyndon Johnson and the Antiwar Opposition," cited above.

[121] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Jack Valenti to McGeorge Bundy, Apr. 23, 1964. On April 24, in a memorandum to Valenti, Cooper outlined the program. Same location.

[122] Johnson Library, C.F. ND 19/CO 312.

It was also agreed that the AFV would coordinate a new people-to-people program under which selected college students would spend the summer in Vietnam working, with expenses paid, with U.S. Government programs. "The concept," Cooper said, "would be to have approximately 50 work with such organizations as the GVN Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Boy Scouts, etc. They would be posted in Saigon and in secure provincial capitals. An important purpose would be to create a body of students who will have a first-hand, hopefully constructive experience in Vietnam which will serve in good stead during the coming academic year." [125]

As the first step in launching the student people-to-people program, Fishel conducted a conference at Michigan State University on June 1 which was attended by students from a number of colleges. With assistance from Cooper, Fishel obtained Vice President Humphrey and USIA Director Rowan as speakers.[126]

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[123] See pt. I of this study for a discussion of Wesley Fishel's role and the composition and operations of the American Friends of Vietnam. See also p. 81 above for the position taken by Fishel and the AFV on Feb. 10, 1965 on the need for strong U.S. action in Vietnam.

[124] Johnson Library, C.F. ND 19/CO 312, Cooper to Valenti, "The American Friends of Vietnam Program," May 5, 1965. Apparently some funds were secured. In a memorandum for the record on Aug. 4, 1965 on a White House meeting that day to discuss the "information problem," (Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam), Cooper was reported to have said at the meeting: ". . . we have an instrument for public opinion on Vietnam in the shape of the 'American Friends of Vietnam.' While we have been careful to keep our hand fairly hidden, we have, in fact, spent a lot of time on it and have been able to find them some money." He added, however, that the raising of money for the AFV was "very difficult."

In a memorandum on Sept. 10, 1965 (same location) which was not addressed to anyone but was apparently prepared for McGeorge Bundy, Cooper described what the AFV had been doing and said that more funds were needed. McGeorge Bundy noted by hand on the memorandum, which he appears to have returned to Cooper: "Hold pending my call to D. [David] Rockefeller Monday."

[125] Johnson Library, C.F. ND 19/CO 312, Cooper to Valenti, May 19, 1965. This was approved on May 20, by the President, (Valenti to the President, May 20, 1965, same location, and 19 students went to Vietnam that summer (Cooper to Valenti, same location, "The American Friends of Vietnam Program," June 7, 1965). In a weekly report to McGeorge Bundy on Aug. 23, 1965 (Johnson Library, NSF Name File, Cooper, "The Asian Week"), which was also signed by Thomson and Donald Ropa, on detail from the CIA, Cooper said: "Our gamble with the summer students' project has paid off. The group of 19 who went as AID provincial assistants return next week. Both official and press accounts quote them as backing the U.S. effort in Vietnam and describing the stateside teach-in crowd as uninformed. Without attempting to organize their post-Vietnam activities, we can count on much spontaneous missionary efforts from them on their campuses." When the students were about to return in September and October 1965, Cooper sent Valenti and McGeorge Bundy a memorandum on September 3, "Exploitation of the 19 student interns returning from Vietnam," (Johnson Library, C.F. ND 19/CO 312) in which he suggested various ways to use the students to support U.S. policy, including press conferences, speaking engagements, feature articles in major magazines. "As you know," he said, "the rationale for sending the students to Vietnam was to expose them to the necessity for our effort there and to have them available on the campuses this fall to counteract the teach-ins." He added that, ". . . to a man, they have become avid supporters of the broad purposes of Administration policies," but he cautioned that, ". . . we should exercise some care in not overwhelming them with requests for their services immediately after their return in order to avoid conclusions on their part that they were recruited, as some initially suspected, for this very purpose."

As another aspect of this effort by the White House to combat what Valenti called the ' "get out of Vietnam' beatniks," [127] and to improve the public's perception of the war, Cooper also arranged for Fishel, who had been a very close adviser in the 1950s to South Vietnamese President Diem, and apparently was also close to Premier Quat, to urge Quat and his government to hire a New York firm to conduct a public relations campaign for South Vietnam in the U.S.[128] Quat did so.

Meanwhile, campus dissent intensified. During March and April there were more teach-ins and more petitions protesting U.S. policy. At Yale University, more than 200 faculty members sent a letter to President Johnson on March 29 calling on him to stop escalating the war and to negotiate an end to the conflict. In a statement of their views they said, among other things:[129]

> American opinion itself is too divided to sustain a long crisis in Vietnam, much less an enlargement of our participation in that war. Among the people we know best, the community of scholars and teachers, there is extensive opposition to escalation. Indeed, a geat many thoughtful people throughout the country, the editors of the *New York Times*, other journalists, publicists of national repute and unimpeachable integrity, like Walter Lippmann, share our view. We believe, therefore, that our policies in Vietnam run the additional risk of creating such discontent, frustration, and disunity here at home as to impair the achievement of other goals and our effectiveness in dealing with the problem of Vietnam itself.

On March 7, a similar plea was made in a letter to the President from 118 faculty members in the Rochester, N.Y. area; on March 21 by 107 faculty members from academic institutions in Rhode Island; on April 11 by more than 200 faculty members at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign).[130]

On April 23, Rusk, responding to faculty critics of the administration, said that they were "talking nonsense" about the nature of the struggle in Vietnam, adding, "I sometimes wonder at the gullibility of educated men and the stubborn disregard of plain facts by men who are supposed to be helping our young to learn. . . ."[131] On May 9, almost 500 faculty members from Massachusetts, including about 200 from Harvard University, signed an advertisement in the *New York Times* entitled "A Reply to Secretary Rusk on Vietnam." Arguing that it was the Johnson administration that was disregarding the facts, the signers of the advertisement called for an immediate cease-fire and negotiations. "The United States," they said, "has the military might to defeat the Vietcong. But unless we show immediate restraint, and show humane imagination in bringing interested parties to the peace table, we risk the loss of the respect and sympathy of men and nations far beyond the present theater of war."

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[126] See in the Johnson Library, C.F. ND 19/CO 312 the memorandum from Valenti to the President, May 7, 1965, and in NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President, the memorandum from Cooper to Valenti, May 17, 1965.

[127] Valenti memorandum to the President, May 7, 1965, cited in previous footnote. Valenti added: "We have set up our counter-force, American Friends of Vietnam, run by 'good' college professors."

[128] Johnson Library, C.F. ND 19/CO 312, Cooper to Valenti, June 7, 1965.

[129] From a copy of the letter printed in *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 8449-8450.

[130] For copies of these see *ibid.*, pp. 4692-4693, 6674-6675, 8128-8129.

[131] For the text of Rusk's speech see the *Department of State Bulletin*, May 10, 1965.

In mid-April, 130 members of the Association of Asian Studies petitioned the President, urging him to avoid further escalation of the war, and to make an "open declaration of America's determination for peace in Eastern Asia" by ceasing bombing and taking the lead in convening an international conference to work out a settlement. Such a declaration, the petition said ". . . would help create the conditions for terminating the insurgency in the South on terms satisfactory to the South."[132] Recent U.S. escalation of the war, it added, had put the U.S. "on a direct collision course with China" which could lead to the "ultimate tragedy in Sino-American relations."

Escalation, the petition stated, was based on three false assumptions:

> First, it assumes that the Soviet Union will, in a showdown, not support Communist China, and that therefore American power can punish China with impunity. The Sino-Soviet dispute has gone through many fluctuations. The Soviet leaders are individual men making decisions. No one can predict what they will be. No expert can state flatly that they will abandon China in the moment of extreme crisis.
>
> Second, it assumes that China and North Vietnam, when confronted with punishing destruction, will surrender to force. The history of these two nations indicates just the opposite. When attacked by the Japanese and the French respectively, the Chinese and the Vietnamese struck back fiercely, made opportunity of the war to strengthen their social organization, and finally triumphed stronger than ever before.
>
> Third, it assumes that the existence of the war will create conditions for stability in South Vietnam, strengthen the South Vietnam army and create better conditions for winning the war in the South. The Viet Cong are powerful because of broad support from the Vietnamese peasantry, and because the latter have been alienated from the government by cruelty, impotence, and selfishness. The succession of "governments" in Saigon promises to further widen the chasm between it and the people. That, if anything, will strengthen, rather than weaken, the Viet Cong.

Chester Cooper responded for the White House. In a letter on April 22 to the sponsors of the petition he said that the assumption that the U.S. was headed toward war with China was false. Moreover, ". . . there is no illusion here that the insurgency in the South can be won by bombing bridges in the North . . . the major effort has been, and will continue to be, in the South." He added that governmental instability in South Vietnam was "difficult and worrisome," but there was no evidence of increased dissidence.

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[132] The petition, which had been drafted by five professors at the University of California, Berkeley, and was sent to the White House on Apr. 13, 1965 by Stanley Sheinbaum of Santa Barbara, and related correspondence are in the Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

Cooper also said he was "curious" as to how a declaration of peaceful intent would help end the insurgency. "In essence," Cooper concluded, "I am astounded at the confidence and assurance your signers appear to have with respect to a situation which we here approach with a considerable amount of caution and care and on which, I am quite sure, [we] have more information than is available to any of you." [133]

Religious leaders and groups were becoming more active in opposing the war, and on April 4, 1965, 2,500 ministers, priests and rabbis signed an advertisement in the *New York Times* entitled, "Mr. President: in the Name of God, Stop It." They called for a cease-fire and negotiations.

Other noted Americans were speaking out individually. Poet Robert Lowell declined an invitation to a White House Festival of the Arts held on June 14, 1965, saying that he viewed current U.S. foreign policy with "greatest dismay and distrust." Others who were invited to the festival joined in supporting Lowell, and the President reacted by taking steps to discourage critics from attending the festival or from commenting on the war during the proceedings. He also ordered a black-out on news coverage of the festival and refused to attend most of the proceedings.[134]

Other prominent academicians supported the President's policy in Vietnam. On July 24, on the eve of the President's decision to commit large-scale ground forces to combat, a statement of support organized by several political scientists with close ties to the government was signed by 67 persons, mostly political scientists.[135] They said that they, too, wanted peace, and believed in a political settlement through negotiations. "We believe that war is a gruesome travesty on civilian decisionmaking and that the war in Vietnam is a hideous burden on the people of that nation." The war in Vietnam resulted, however, from "the deliberate exportation by Hanoi of waves of troops trained in the tactics of terrorism and guerrilla warfare," and, faced with the "sharp escalation of Hanoi's aggression," the President chose wisely, they concluded, in undertaking a "restrained increase" in the U.S. military effort "designed to escalate the price of aggression and enhance the incentives for peaceful settlement."[136]

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[133] Same location, copy of letter from Cooper to Professor Joseph Levenson, Department of History, University of California at Berkeley, Apr. 22, 1965.

One member of the Asian Studies Association, Professor Roger Swearingen, then the acting director of the School of International Relations at the University of Southern California, criticized the petition in a letter to President Johnson: ". . . its pretentious tone, its disregard of minimum standards of scholarship, lack of appreciation of the realities of foreign policy and policy formulation, oversimplification of the issues in Vietnam and, in general, failing to appreciate either the essence of the Communist challenge on the nature and complexities of the problem in Vietnam." Same location, letter from Professor Swearingen to President Johnson, Apr. 6, 1965, with attached copy of an Open Letter to Members of the Association of Asian Studies, Apr. 2, 1965, and a reply to Swearingen from Chester Cooper on Apr. 22, 1965.

Swearingen continued to criticize academic critics of the war, and in 1966 he was appointed to a public action group which had been instigated by the White House to support the President's policies.

[134] The festival was organized by Eric F. Goldman, a Princeton University historian then on the White House staff as a Special Consultant to the President. For a complete account see Goldman, *The Tragedy of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 418-475.

[135] Among the academicians were: Stephen Bailey of Syracuse University; Eleanor Lansing Dulles of Georgetown University; Carl Friedrich, Morton Halperin, and Samuel Huntington of Harvard University; Lucien Pye of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Jeane Kirkpatrick of Trinity College (Washington); Charles Burton Marshall of the Washington Center of Foreign Policy Research; Robert Osgood of the School of Advanced International Studies of the Johns Hopkins University; and Seymour Martin Lipset and Paul Seabury of the University of California at Berkeley. There was no designated organizational sponsor for the statement.

At about the same time (mid-July), another statement of support was issued by the trustees of Freedom House.[137] Endorsed by 130 faculty members from 70 institutions, it declared that withdrawal from Vietnam at that time would be a mistake and that it was important to stop Communist aggression.[138]

On May 15, 1965, antiwar criticism among faculty and students climaxed with a national teach-in in Washington which was attended by about 5,000 people, with more than 100,000 on over 100 campuses in 35 states listening and watching by radio and television. It was organized by the Inter-University Committee for a Public Hearing on Vietnam, an outgrowth of the March 1965 teach-in at the University of Michigan.

Sponsors of the teach-in invited McGeorge Bundy and others from the administration to present the case for the Government's Vietnam policy. Bundy, a former dean and professor at Harvard University, agreed to make the major speech for the administration's position. W. W. Rostow (Director of Policy Planning for the State Department and formerly a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology), and Daniel Ellsberg (an assistant to McNaughton and McNamara and formerly a member of the faculty at Harvard University, who later became an anti-war activist), among others, were selected by the White House to serve as Government participants. Prominent academicians defending U.S. policy included Zbygniew Brzezinski from Columbia University, Wesley Fishel and Robert Scigliano from Michigan State University, Samuel Huntington from Harvard University, and Robert Scalapino from the University of California at Berkeley. Principal academic opponents included Hans Morgenthau of the University of Chicago, Bernard Fall of Howard University, Stanley Hoffmann of Harvard University and George McT. Kahin of Cornell University.[139]

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[136] The statement was reprinted in *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 17727-17728.

[137] The statement was reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 22777-22778. Leo Cherne, head of the International Rescue Committee, who had been involved in U.S. efforts to install and support Diem, was also chairman of the Freedom House executive committee.

[138] The 130 signers included Zbygniew Brzezinski of Columbia University, Lincoln Bloomfield, Ithiel de Sola Pool and Lucien Pye of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Wesley Fishel of Michigan State University; Sidney Hook and Frank Trager of New York University; Joseph P. Harris, Frederick C. Mosher and Robert Scalapino of the University of California at Berkeley; Morton Kaplan of the University of Chicago; William Fifield of the University of Michigan; Daniel Cheever of the University of Pittsburgh; Eugene V. Rostow of Yale University; Carl J. Friedrich, Morton Halperin, and Samuel Huntington of Harvard University; Stefan T. Possony of Stanford University; Max Lerner of Brandeis University; Daniel S. Cheever and Donald C. Stone of the University of Pittsburgh; William Kintner and Robert Strauz-Hupe of the University of Pennsylvania.

[139] The opening speech at the teach-in was given by former Harvard University professor and Kennedy aide Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., then teaching at the City University of New York, who said that although the 1954 decision to defend South Vietnam was probably a mistake, the U.S. could not withdraw unilaterally without adversely affecting other allies, especially in Southeast Asia, while helping the Chinese. Schlesinger praised President Johnson's efforts to negotiate, which he said was the only solution to the problem. He criticized military escalation, especially the bombing of North Vietnam, and said that the U.S. could better demonstrate its commitment by making limited increases in U.S. ground forces and developing a stronger political program. He also criticized Dean Rusk for his comment about the "gullibility" of some educators, saying that after reading the State Department's February 1965 white paper he wondered about the gullibility of Secretaries of State. "But he also deplored," according to a news

Continued

Although the White House, working primarily through Chester Cooper, had managed to persuade the sponsors of the teach-in to adopt certain procedures for keeping the meeting as balanced and reasonable as possible, there was considerable concern about what might happen, especially the possibility that it would end with a "climactic call for a Congressional investigation." [140]

At his request, the State Department provided McGeorge Bundy an extensive analysis of Hans Morgenthau's position on Vietnam.[141] The White House also obtained a number of tickets to the teach-in which it distributed to its supporters, including many persons in the Government, in order to encourage friendly attendance.[142]

At the last minute, McGeorge Bundy sent word that he could not attend the meeting. It was revealed that he and three other U.S. officials had been sent by the President on a hastily arranged trip to review the situation in the Dominican Republic. As Bundy explained in an interview some years later, "I got into trouble with the President by agreeing to debate Hans Morgenthau . . . he just didn't want to dignify the opposition by debating."[143]

The teach-in did not result in a call for action by Congress or any other dramatic actions, and W. W. Rostow, for one, concluded that participation by the government had been beneficial. "On a one-shot basis," he said in a memorandum to Rusk on May 17, "it defused quite a lot of tension on our flank." But he also recommended that the Government should not encourage a continuing relationship with the teach-in group, the leaders of which, he said, "charmed and dazzled by some public limelight, are interested in institutionalizing a status for themselves to permit sustained pressure on the government." "They represent in American academic life," he added, "a minority of no great distinction."[144]

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story, "the use of slogans and bright phrases in the academic world in dealing with a complicated problem." *New York Times*, May 16, 1965.

In the *New York Times* for May 17, there were long excerpts from the statements made at the meeting. See also Meg Greenfield, "After the Washington Teach-In," *The Reporter*, June 3, 1965.

[140] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President, Memorandum for Bundy from Cooper, "Status of the 'Teach-In,' " May 15, 1965.

[141] Same location.

[142] Same location, Memorandum from Chester Cooper to McGeorge Bundy, "The Teach-In," May 14, 1965. On the same day, Cooper sent a memorandum to Bundy, "Thoughts on the 'Teach-in' " (same location), in which he suggested that there was a "growing and potentially dangerous chasm between a significant segment of intelligent, if often naive, academics and 'The Government'. . . ." It was, he said, a chasm "that can and should be bridged (not closed)," and "if you [Bundy] do nothing more on Saturday than convey a clear image of the humaneness, reasonableness and intelligence of top policy-makers—whatever the provocation—you will do much to begin to bridge the chasm." The primary objective, Cooper said, should be to "discredit their caricature of us," as well as to educate the critics—"but this is probably a less promising exercise." There would be the "temptation to score debater's points," but this should be resisted. More important was the demonstration that the concern of Government officials "for peace and reason that runs every bit as deep as that of their academic counterparts." "Equally important," he added, "is the diversion of sloganized protest and *ad hominem* argument into the national exploration of policy alternatives, given our present Vietnam inheritance—through treating the alternatives in some detail and pressing the academics to focus on these alternatives."

[143] CRS Interview with McGeorge Bundy, Jan. 8, 1979. On June 21, 1965, Bundy appeared in a panel debate sponsored by the same group and televised nationwide as a CBS-TV News Special Report. For the text, see *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 15396-15401. His opponents were Hans Morgenthau and O. Edmund Clubb of Columbia University, formerly an Asian specialist in the State Department. Supporting Bundy's view were Brzezinski, and Guy Pauker of the RAND Corporation.

[144] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

Publicly, the White House ignored the teach-in, preferring to let Senator Mansfield serve as spokesman. He did so in a statement in which he said that the Johnson administration would not be "goaded by the voices of an impatient arrogance" into withdrawing troops from either Vietnam or the Dominican Republic.[145] He continued:

> These situations are cause for deep concern. That concern is felt by the President and by all who are in positions of responsibility—Democrats and Republicans alike—in the Government. The President has not placed American military forces in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic because he seeks a great war.
>
> He did not put them there because he seeks to demonstrate that the American military muscle is strong. He put them there because, on the basis of the facts available to him, he saw no alternative if he was to meet his responsibilities for the safety and freedom of the nation. And there is every expectation that he will take them out just as soon as a satisfactory alternative is found.

Privately, however, the White House was concerned about the teach-in, and according to the White House Daily Diary for May 15, the President spent part of the day watching the proceedings on television.

The President continued to receive support from Senators James Eastland (D/Miss.) and Dodd, co-chairmen of the Internal Security Subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee, of which Eastland was chairman. On May 17-18, 1965, Dodd presided over hearings on the "Communist Youth Program" at which FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover warned of the activities of the Communist Party which he said were directed toward manipulating and controlling American college students. Hoover cited the Free Speech Movement at the University of California at Berkeley in the fall of 1964 as an example of "a demonstration which," he said, "while not Communist-originated or controlled, has been exploited by a few Communists for their own ends." Stefan Possony, director of International Studies at the Hoover Institution, located at Stanford University, (but not a part of the university), also testified, saying, among other things, that "the radicalization of American youth is proceeding beyond the wildest expectations of the Communists."[146]

A Gallup Poll released on May 16, 1965 indicated that the public was even less certain of what should be done in Vietnam than it had been a few weeks earlier, with declining support for both the less militant and the more militant alternatives and a rather substantial increase in the number of those in the "other, no opinion" category:[147]

> *"In your opinion, what would you like to see the United States do next about Vietnam?"*

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[145] *New York Times*, May 16, 1965.

[146] *Ibid.*, May 18, 1965.

[147] Gallup, *The Gallup Poll*, vol. 3, p. 1939-1940.

[In percent]

	May 16, 1965	April 23, 1965
Withdraw completely from Vietnam	13	17
Start negotiations, stop fighting	12	12
Continue present U.S. policy	13	14
Step up military activity	8	12
Go all out, declare war	15	19
Other, no opinion	39	33

The same poll found that 52 percent of the public supported the involvement of U.S. forces in Southeast Asia, a very slight increase since the same question was asked in January:

> *"Some people think we should not have become involved with our military forces in Southeast Asia while others think we should have. What is your opinion?"*

[In percent]

	May 16, 1965	January 31, 1965
Should	52	50
Should not	26	28
No opinion	22	22

According to a Gallup Poll released on June 11, 1965, based on interviews in mid-May, there was considerable public attention to and concern about the war:[148]

> *"What do you think is the most important problem facing this country today?"*

	Percent
Vietnam	23
Civil rights*	23
Threat of war	16
Prestige abroad	9
Spread of world communism	9
Dominican Republic Crisis	4
High cost of living	4
Lack of religion, immorality	4
Unemployment	3
Internal communism	3
Juvenile delinquency	2
Poverty	2
Other, no opinion	8

(These figures total more than 100 percent because some people gave more than one answer.)

*At the time of the poll, Congress was considering a major civil rights bill, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and demonstrations for voting rights had recently occurred in Selma, Alabama.

Lyndon Johnson may have continued to ignore or shun the academicians, the religious leaders, and leading intellectuals in the arts and letters, but in mid-May he received a letter from a man who presumably had more influence: Clark Clifford, a former assistant to President Truman, long-time friend of Johnson and Washington lawyer and power-broker, then serving as chairman of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (a part-time, non-salaried position.)

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[148] Gallup, *The Gallup Poll,* vol. 3, p. 1944.

This was Clifford's letter of May 17, 1965 to the President:[149]

> I am returning herewith the letter of the Director of Central Intelligence, dated May 8, 1965, together with enclosures.
>
> I wish to make one major point.
>
> I believe our ground forces in South Vietnam should be kept to a minimum, consistent with the protection of our installations and property in that country. My concern is that a substantial buildup of U.S. ground troops would be construed by the Communists, and by the world, as a determination on our part to win the war on the ground.
>
> This could be a quagmire. It could turn into an open end commitment on our part that would take more and more ground troops, without a realistic hope of ultimate victory.
>
> I do not think the situation is comparable to Korea. The political posture of the parties involved, and the physical conditions, including terrain, are entirely different.
>
> I continue to believe that the constant probing of every avenue leading to a possible settlement will ultimately be fruitful. It won't be what we want, but we can learn to live with it.

It is not known what Johnson's reaction was to Clifford's letter—he does not mention it in his memoirs—but given his close relationship with Clifford, and Clifford's personal standing in Washington and political prominence, one might assume that it was an opinion that could not be treated lightly.[150]

New Political and Military Problems in South Vietnam

In May 1965, the Quat government suffered political and military setbacks. In early May, Quat, with U.S. support, persuaded the military to abolish the Armed Forces Council, thus strengthening civilian government. There was increasing opposition from some of the Catholics, however, who claimed that Quat was controlled by the Buddhists and was discriminating against Catholics. On May 12, the Quat government ordered South Vietnamese Air Force planes to intercept and turn back a commercial aircraft bringing former junta leader Duong Van ("Big") Minh—reportedly the Catholic's choice to replace Quat—from Thailand, where he had been living, to Saigon.[151] On May 20-21, police arrested several persons who were said to be plotting a coup against Quat. Col. Pham Ngoc Thao, the leader of the group, who had been most recently involved in the attempted coup against Khanh in February, escaped.[152] According to one of those captured, the objective of the coup was to reinstate Huong as Chief of State and "Big" Minh as Premier. Quat told U.S. officials that the coup appeared to have been staged with the aid of the Communists, and that, according to one of the plotters, two battalions of South Vietnamese Communist forces were to move into Saigon to support the uprising.[153]

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[149] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[150] Clifford, in a letter to CRS on Feb. 22, 1988, says that he does not recall receiving any "specific response" from the President, but that because the President was a "busy man beset by many responsibilities, I did not expect his reply to my correspondence."

[151] U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Central File, "The Situation in Vietnam (6 May-12 May 1965)," OCI No. 0619/65.

[152] As was indicated above, p. 109, Thao was later captured and killed.

Toward the end of May, the figurehead Chief of State, Phan Khac Suu, refused to approve two Cabinet changes which Quat, at the urging of the U.S., wanted to make, and this precipitated a political crisis. Taylor and U. Alexis Johnson met each day with the parties involved to urge them to resolve their differences and to emphasize "the over-riding importance of political stability at this time of increasing U.S. commitment and support."[154]

Meanwhile, in the middle of May the Communists had begun a military offensive in the northern provinces of South Vietnam, the goal of which, according to a study by the Communists which was published in 1980 by the People's Army Publishing House of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, was "to annihilate an important part of the enemy's elite main-force manpower," to attack and interdict strategic roads and the railroad, and to step up guerrilla warfare and the "political struggle movement of the masses."[155] This was the first time, the study said, that relatively large main-force units had been used.

As a result of this Communist offensive, from mid-May to mid-June 1965 South Vietnamese Army units suffered a series of defeats which alarmed U.S. officials in Saigon and Washington.

Toward the end of May 1965, informed journalists were reporting that because of the increasing seriousness of the military situation, the U.S., with approximately 52,000 U.S. forces conducting limited operations out of bases on the coast, was preparing to expand those operations. Eventually, said Hanson Baldwin in the *New York Times* on May 19, this could lead to the deployment of 500,000 American troops.

On Saturday June 5, the Intelligence Committee of the U.S. Mission in Saigon, with the concurrence of Taylor and Westmoreland, cabled Washington that South Vietnamese combat losses and the "cumulative psychological impact of a series of defeats" could lead to the "collapse . . . of the will to fight" on the part of Vietnamese forces, and that U.S. troops would probably have to be used to avert such a collapse.[156]

At 1:00 p.m. that same day, Rusk held a small luncheon at the State Department, attended by McNamara, Ball, McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy, Llewellyn Thompson, and McNaughton, to discuss Vietnam. At 2:00 p.m., the President walked in unannounced. He stayed until 4:00 p.m. William Bundy gives this account of what transpired:[157]

> The discussion turned to troops in South Vietnam, and the President pitched in. Would more Americans, he asked, mean

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[153] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 3838, May 21, 1965.

[154] Same location, Saigon to Washington 3989, June 1, 1965.

[155] *The Anti-U.S. Resistance War for National Salvation, 1954-1975: Military Events,* prepared by the War Experience Recapitulation Committee of the High-Level Military Institute (Hanoi: People's Army Publishing House, 1980), p. 75; translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service, and published by the Joint Publications Research Service, Arlington, Va. (JPRS80968); distributed by the National Technical Information Service, Springfield, Va.

[156] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Saigon to Washington 4074, June 5, 1965.

[157] Bundy MS., ch. 26, p. 3.

> that the Vietnamese would do less? McNamara said there was no sign of this reaction now. What about the morale of the American forces, and the political reaction of the Vietnamese to having a lot of Americans around? Again, McNamara thought these were satisfactory.

According to brief handwritten notes kept by McGeorge Bundy, the President asked, "Who sees our purpose and means of achieving it, out there? Will it be so costly? How do we ever expect to win?"[158] He said he was "shocked by skills of VC—hit and run successfully," and he asked the group, "How do you expect to wind this thing up? You'll just get 'I'll go to Korea' " (a promise made by the Republican nominee for President, Dwight Eisenhower during the 1952 campaign, to signify his determination to end the Korean war).

William Bundy says that three answers were given:[159]

> Rusk said that if we showed the other side it could not succeed without major escalation, Hanoi would once again think of the takeover of the South as a long-range project, revert to political rather than military tactics, and "live to come again"; McNamara thought that the combination of a stalemate in the South and growing pain in the North would do it—but as things stood there was doubt we could get a stalemate, for Hanoi must surely be convinced it was winning; Ball that we must make it tough for the Viet Cong and Hanoi, but also give them an alternative—which he thought could be done if the Saigon government could be held together and could offer amnesties and other parts of the Acheson-Cutler Plan. Sober answers, all fundamentally embodying a defensive and long-term strategy, premised on the rational belief that a frustrated and pained Hanoi must in time call it off.

The President also discussed the Vietnam situation on June 3 from 10:39 a.m. to 11:50 a.m. with congressional Democratic leaders. Present were the President, Speaker McCormack, Albert, Boggs, Mansfield and Long, as well as the Vice President, and O'Brien, Reedy and Valenti from the White House. This led to another Mansfield memorandum to the President on June 5, in which he said, ". . . I want to stress my support for your resistance to pressures for an irreversible extension of the war in Asia. That is what the bombing of Hanoi-Haiphong could well amount to." Mansfield went on to discuss the reasons for not bombing Hanoi-Haiphong, and for not getting more deeply involved in Vietnam. The U.S. interest in Vietnam, he concluded, ". . . calls for the minimum military effort which is necessary to hold the situation in the South from falling apart altogether and a maximum initiative on our part to get this whole sorry business to a conference table as soon as possible."[160]

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[158] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy.

[159] Bundy MS., pp. 4-6.

[160] Johnson Library, NSF Name File, Mansfield. There apparently are no notes on the June 3 meeting.

On June 14, 1965 Mansfield sent the President another memorandum (same location) proposing several steps that the U.S. might take to indicate its willingness to negotiate.

CHAPTER 5

WESTMORELAND REQUESTS MAJOR GROUND FORCES

On June 7, 1965, in what became known as the "44 battalion" request, General Westmoreland asked for authorization to strengthen U.S. forces and to use them more actively in the war.[1] He said he needed an immediate increase of 41,000, which would bring the total of U.S. forces to 123,000 (approximately 82,000 had already been authorized). He added, however, that 52,000 additional troops might be required, bringing the total to 175,000. The 175,000 troops would consist of 34 Army and Marine maneuver battalions [2] (22 Army and 12 Marines), supported by artillery battalions, engineer battalions, air defense battalions, helicopter battalions, together with Navy and Air Force combat units and their supporting forces.

In addition to the 34 U.S. maneuver battalions, Westmoreland recommended the deployment of 10 third-country maneuver battalions, 9 from South Korea and one from Australia-New Zealand, a total of 44 maneuver battalions. If the Korean troops were not forthcoming, however, the U.S. would need to provide nine more maneuver battalions, which would increase the total number of U.S. troops to almost 200,000 (43 maneuver battalions).

In his cable, Westmoreland, after reviewing recent Communist gains and the decline in the capability and performance of South Vietnamese forces, concluded:

> . . . I see no course of action open to us except to reinforce our efforts in SVN with additional U.S. or Third Country forces as rapidly as is practical during the critical weeks ahead. Additionally, studies must continue and plans developed to deploy even greater forces, if and when required, to attain our objectives or counter enemy initiatives. Ground forces deployed to selected areas along the coast and inland will be used both offensively and defensively.

He added:

> U.S. ground troops are gaining experience and thus far have performed well. Although they have not yet engaged the enemy in strength, I am convinced that U.S. troops with their energy, mobility, and firepower can successfully take the fight to the VC.

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[1] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC 070335Z, June 1965, "U.S. Troop Deployment to SVN."

[2] Maneuver battalions are either infantry, mechanized infantry, or armor. As of 1965, there were usually between 9 and 12 maneuver battalions of 800 soldiers each in a U.S. Army infantry division, which consisted of about 15,000 soldiers.

As Westmoreland described the request in his memoirs: "No more niceties about defensive posture and reaction, I intimated; we had to forget about enclaves and take the war to the enemy."[3]

CINCPAC and the JCS agreed with Westmoreland's proposal. Taylor did not.

The 44 battalion request, according to the *Pentagon Papers,* "stirred up a veritable hornet's nest in Washington . . . Washington saw that it was Westmoreland's intention to aggressively take the war to the enemy with other than Vietnamese troops, and in such a move the spectre of U.S. involvement in a major Asia ground war was there for all to see. With no provision for quick withdrawal, and there was none, the long-term implications for the U.S. in terms of lives and money could not be averted."[4]

The next day (June 8), another hornet's nest was stirred up when Robert J. McCloskey, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, announced that, "American forces would be available for combat support together with the Vietnamese forces as and when necessary."[5] On June 9, the *New York Times* said in an editorial: "The American people were told by a minor State Department official yesterday, that, in effect, they were in a land war on the continent of Asia. This is only one of the extraordinary aspects of the first formal announcement that a decision has been made to commit American ground forces to open combat in South Vietnam: The nation is informed about it not by the President, not by a Cabinet member, not even by a sub-Cabinet official, but by a public relations officer."

When President Johnson, who had been seeking to avoid publicity over the use of U.S. forces in combat, learned of McCloskey's statement, he reportedly "went into one of his wildest rages. . . ."[6] The White House issued a statement denying that there had been any change in the mission of U.S. forces in Vietnam, but saying that as a part of their role of protecting military installations those forces could be used in combat when requested by the South Vietnamese and when, in Westmoreland's judgment, the "general military situation urgently requires it."[7]

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[3] Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, p. 140.

[4] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 462.

[5] *New York Times*, June 9, 1965, and U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Washington to Saigon 2832, June 8, 1965. When he made the statement, McCloskey mentioned that American military commanders in Saigon had already made it clear that U.S. forces would be used in offensive combat. He was referring to a statement by General DePuy several days earlier in a press briefing in Saigon in which, in response to a planted question, he stated that the time would come when U.S. forces would "play their role." After it received word that this statement had been carried by Reuters news service, the State Department urged the U.S. Mission to get the South Vietnamese Government to make a prompt public announcement of the combat role of U.S. forces. U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Washington to Saigon 2801, June 4, 1965. The Mission replied that in view of the low-key way in which DePuy had made the announcement, plus the fact that correspondents in Saigon "regard gradual passage U.S. forces to combat role [as] natural, formal GVN announcement would seem artificial at this stage and call undue attention this development." Same location, Saigon to Washington 4058, June 5, 1965.

[6] Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, p. 587. According to Halberstam (p. 593), the President and his associates ". . . were moving toward war, but in such imperceptible degrees that neither the Congress nor the press could ever show a quantum jump. All the decisions were being cleverly hidden; he [President Johnson] was cutting it thin to hold off opposition. If there were no decisions which were crystallized and hard, then they could not leak, and if they could not leak, then the opposition could not point to them."

[7] *New York Times*, June 10, 1965, and U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Washington to all diplomatic posts, Circular 2470, June 9, 1965.

In a press conference on June 9, Rusk was asked about the matter and his reply was, in part, ". . . obviously we don't expect these men to sit there like hypnotized rabbits waiting for the Viet Cong to strike."[8]

When he was asked about the incident in an interview some years later, McCloskey said that he made the statement in the press briefing out of his concern that the government was misleading the news media and the feeling that his personal credibility and the institutional credibility of the State Department were "on the line." He said he had been "convinced ever since that it was the right thing to do even though it caused some temporary pain."[9]

On June 8, from 1:30 p.m. to 2:35 p.m., the President held the first discussion of Westmoreland's 44 battalion request with Ambassador Taylor, who had just flown in from Saigon, Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Ball, Vance, William Bundy, Raborn, Helms, and General Wheeler. There was general opposition to the size of the requested increase, as well as considerable concern about the effect on the South Vietnamese of large-scale U.S. military involvement.[10] Taylor, who favored an increase of 8,000 U.S. troops over the 82,000 already authorized, took the position that the U.S. should proceed carefully in order to avoid a slackening on the part of the South Vietnamese. Others, including McNamara, Rusk, and McGeorge Bundy, favored holding the line at about 100,000, or 18,000 more than was then authorized. (In a subsequent meeting on June 10, Taylor said he agreed with the 18,000 increase.)[11] They, too, wanted to avoid adverse effects on the South Vietnamese, as well as to see what progress could be made with that many troops. Ball said that the decisive question was, "When does this become a white man's war?" The issue, Ball added, was not between 100,000 and 150,000, but between holding the line or expanding to 300,000-400,000. Once the line was crossed, he argued, such a large increase would be inevitable.[12]

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[8] *New York Times*, June 10, 1965, and U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Washington to all diplomatic posts, Circular 2483, June 10, 1965.

[9] CRS Interview with Robert McCloskey, June 15, 1988. McCloskey said that for several weeks prior to the briefing, reporters covering the State Department, based on their own hunches and on information from their colleagues in Saigon, had pressed him as to whether U.S. Marines were engaging in combat, and that, speaking for the State Department, and under instructions from the White House, he had replied that the Marines would fight only in self-defense. He said he began to question this explanation, and, together with James Greenfield, Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, determined that the Government was misleading the press and the public, and that a credibility problem was developing. Remembering the U-2 incident (when a U.S. spy plane was brought down in the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. initially claimed it was a weather observation aircraft) and the adverse effects of the Government's attempt to conceal the truth, he decided that steps should be taken to prevent a similar problem. He talked to Rusk and to Ball about his misgivings, but he said that when the question came up at the briefing he answered it without being authorized to make that statement. If he had anticipated that the line of questioning would develop as it did, he added, he would have asked Rusk's approval to make the statement.

[10] This account of the June 8 meeting is from Bundy MS., ch. 26, pp. 6-9. There apparently are no White House notes of the meeting except for handwritten notes by McGeorge Bundy, located in the Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy, that are too cursory to be useful.

[11] Taylor said he agreed with the 100,000 figure because, "The strength of the enemy offensive had completely overcome my former reluctance to use American troops in general combat. Also, I thought that, since the limited air attacks against North Vietnam had failed thus far to produce any evidence of inclination on the part of the enemy to negotiate, for psychological effect we would have to raise the level of our air efforts over North Vietnam at the same time that we increased our strength on the ground. I had become convinced that we were going too slow in the application of military power, air, and ground, to accomplish our intended purpose." Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares*, p. 347.

Should There Be a New Congressional Resolution or a Declaration of War?

At the June 8 meeting there apparently was also a discussion of a new congressional resolution, and after the meeting McGeorge Bundy asked the Legal Adviser of the State Department, Leonard Meeker, to draft a congressional resolution "on an urgent basis." Later that day, Meeker sent Bundy this text:[13]

> WHEREAS the Congress on August 7, 1964 adopted a Joint Resolution to promote the maintenance of international peace and security in Southeast Asia; and
>
> WHEREAS the President has stated the firm determination of the United States to halt Communist aggression in Viet-Nam; and
>
> WHEREAS the President has made it clear that our purpose in Viet-Nam is to achieve a peaceful settlement and that we remain ready with this purpose for unconditional discussions; and
>
> WHEREAS the Communist powers have not only rejected such unconditional discussions for a peaceful settlement, but have stepped up their armed aggression against South Viet-Nam; and

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[12] According to Halberstam (*The Best and the Brightest,* p. 596), at a meeting in early June 1965 (he does not give a date), General Wheeler was asked by the President how many U.S. forces would be required "to do the job."

"And Wheeler answered, 'It all depends on what your definition of the job is, Mr. President. If you intend to drive the last Vietcong out of Vietnam it will take seven hundred, eight hundred thousand, a million men and about five years.' He paused to see if anyone picked him up. 'But if your definition of the job is to prevent the Communists from taking over the country, that is, stopping them from doing it, then you're talking about gradations and different levels. So tell us what the job is and we'll answer it.' But no one said anything; it was not the kind of thing they picked people up on. . . ."

Halberstam *(ibid.)* describes another meeting late in June (he does not give a date), attended also by Clark Clifford, in which General Wheeler repeated his earlier assertion that with 750,000 troops, the U.S. could win in six or seven years:

"The way I [Clifford] understand it, we're talking about a figure of seven hundred and fifty thousand troops and a war that will go on for five or six years and I'd like to ask General Wheeler a question.

"The President immediately interrupted him: 'No one's using a figure like that.'

"Clifford turned to Wheeler, and Wheeler nodded his head and said yes, he had indeed used a figure like that.

"Johnson, irritated, said it was ridiculous. No one envisioned a figure like that.

"At which point Clifford asked to continue and said, 'Even if it is the figure and it works, my question is, What then?'

"Wheeler looked a little puzzled. 'I don't understand the question.'

"So Clifford repeated it: if we won, after all that time, with all the investment, 'What do we do? Are we still involved? Do we still have to stay there?'

"And Wheeler answered yes, we would have to keep a major force there, for perhaps as long as twenty or thirty years. Whereupon the conversation again went in different directions and the question of the figure was dropped."

Available notes of the meetings of the President and his advisers during June 1965 do not mention these statements, however, and in a letter to CRS on Feb. 22, 1988, Clark Clifford says, "To the best of my recollection, I did not attend any White House meetings on Vietnam during the month of June 1965." He says that the quotations attributed to him by Halberstam "do reflect my thoughts about Vietnam," but he notes that most of the meetings with the President which he attended occurred in late July 1965, and suggests that "a more precise account" can be found in Valenti's notes of those meetings. See below, pp. 411 ff.

[13] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, memorandum to Rusk from Meeker, June 9, 1965, with attached memorandum to McGeorge Bundy, June 8, 1965, Subject: "Further Congressional Resolution on Vietnam."

> WHEREAS a number of allied countries, including the Republic of Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, have sent elements of their armed forces to Viet-Nam in order to assist South Viet-Nam in resisting aggression: Now, therefore, be it
>
> *Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of American in Congress assembled,* That the Congress approves and supports the policy of the President in seeking a just and lasting peace in Viet-Nam, and in supporting the economic development of the area, so as to enhance the freedom of the people of Viet-Nam to work out their destiny.
>
> Sec. 2. The Congress approves and supports the taking of steps necessary to carry out this policy including, if the President determines it to be necessary, the dispatch of additional elements of the United States armed forces to the area in order to repel the Communist armed attack from the North.
>
> Sec. 3. This Resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent Resolution of the Congress.[14]

After the meeting on June 8, the President called Senator Mansfield to tell him about the Westmoreland request and to ask his advice about seeking a congressional resolution. In a memorandum to the President on June 9,[15] Mansfield advised against another congressional resolution, saying:

> With respect to another Congressional resolution on the situation, I cannot see the value of it at this point whether it originates here or with you. The Senate cannot direct you in the conduct of foreign relations even if it wanted to and I think you know that there is no substantial group in the Senate which is going to take the initiative in urging you to put more American ground forces into South Viet Nam. I think you know too, that what has been done to date in the way of resolutions, however onesided the votes, has been done with grave doubts and much trepidation on the part of many Senators. It has been done largely on faith, out of loyalty to you and on the basis of the general view that when the President has the re-

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[14] This language, as can be seen by comparing it with the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed by Congress in August 1964 (Public Law 88-408), was a revision of the earlier resolution and took into account the fact that some U.S. forces had already been deployed to South Vietnam. Following is the text of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution minus the whereas clauses (for the full text, see pt. II of this study, p. 302):

"*Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,* That the Congress approves and supports the determination of the President, as Commander in Chief, to take all necessary measures to repel any armed attack against the forces of the United States and to prevent further aggression.

"Sec. 2. The United States regards as vital to its national interest and to world peace the maintenance of international peace and security in southeast Asia. Consonant with the Constitution of the United States and the Charter of the United Nations and in accordance with its obligations under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, the United States is, therefore, prepared, as the President determines, to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force, to assist any member or protocol state of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty requesting assistance in defense of its freedom.

"Sec. 3. This resolution shall expire when the President shall determine that the peace and security of the area is reasonably assured by international conditions created by action of the United Nations or otherwise, except that it may be terminated earlier by concurrent resolution of the Congress."

[15] Johnson Library, NSF Name File, Mansfield.

> sponsibility and when he requests legislative support in a crisis, he should have it.
>
> But if you make another request, at this time, in connection specifically with the use of ground forces, I am concerned at the possible reaction. It is not nearly as predictable as in the past when the requests have been for support of policy in general terms or for funds. A request at this time could set off a wave of criticism and of demands for inquiries which, in the end, even though a resolution were overwhelmingly approved, would not in any way strengthen your hand, render your task easier or make your burden of responsibility lighter.

On the question of U.S. policy, Mansfield said that the key issue was the goal of the United States in Vietnam. There were, Mansfield said, three principal alternatives. The first was to secure all of South Vietnam, "to the smallest hamlet." This, he said, would take years or decades and would involve "upwards of a million soldiers on the ground. . . ." The second was to secure the larger population centers and provincial capitals in South Vietnam, which would take "something in the range of 500,000. . . ." The third was to maintain a sufficiently strong position to be able to negotiate effectively. With 100,000 U.S. ground forces and strong naval and air support, such a position, he said, could be maintained for at least a year or so.

Mansfield added:

> The absence of a decision as to which of the above approaches really serves our national interests, seems to me to be the crux of the difficulty which has confronted us all along. . . . It is apparent that you are being advised to continue to take at least the second course. The rate of commitment is accelerating and it is quite likely that it will lead rapidly to pressure to follow the first course, if not to go beyond it to all-out war with China. That may not be the way it looks now but a course once set in motion, as you know, often develops its own momentum and rationale whatever the initial intentions.

Senate Republican Leader Dirksen also opposed a new congressional resolution, saying that debate on it would hurt the morale of U.S. forces in Vietnam.[16]

Although there appeared to be little support for his position, Senator Javits, who for some weeks had been stressing the need for the President to ask Congress for additional approval before becoming involved in a larger war,[17] again urged him to do so. "We have been moving in the direction of a massive, bogdown land struggle in Asia without any specific consent by Congress or the people for that kind of war," Javits said in a Senate speech on June 9,[18] adding:

> Although the President has the power, for all practical purposes, to commit the United States to such a struggle, I have said on many occasions over the last 2 months that it would be disastrous for this country if the President were to use that

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[16] *New York Times*, June 25, 1965.

[17] In addition to earlier references, see Javits' speech on May 18, 1965, *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 10847-10848.

[18] For Javits' remarks and comments by other Senators cited here, see *ibid.*, pp. 12983-12987.

power without first asking Congress for a resolution—similar to the joint resolution of August 10, 1964 [Gulf of Tonkin Resolution]—to authorize specifically an expansion of the U.S. military role in the Vietnamese struggle onto a new and qualitatively different level. Without a mandate from the Congress and the people, a U.S. land struggle in Asia could engender criticism and division in this country that will make recent protests over our Vietnam policy look like a high school picnic.

Senator Aiken asked Senator Javits whether he thought Congress should declare war, saying, "Congress would do so if it were asked to do so by the President. If that were to happen, the President would be relieved of responsibility. It would take him off the hook. It would be exactly what he wants. I am sure of that and I cannot say that I blame him." Javits agreed with Aiken that if Congress were asked to declare war it would probably do so, but he thought that would be "most unwise." ". . . modern techniques," he said, referring to the use of congressional resolutions to authorize the use of force, "are so subtle that we are better off not having a formal declaration of war. I do believe, however, that what is tantamount to that—in terms of tying the Congress and the people in with the President—is for the President to come to us for an expression of opinion now, when it seems rather clear that the situation is about to escalate into a major ground struggle. . . . I believe that under the present situation, the President ought to come to us so that we may have a voice in the decision, along with him, without a declaration of war, which is unnecessary, and which, in my judgment, is too primitive for the times."

In a colloquy with Senators Gruening and McGee, Javits once again took the position that the President did not require action by Congress. "The President, as Commander in Chief, has the right," he said, "to dispatch troops to protect the interests of the United States anywhere in the world. . . . But . . . present events can lead to major international war, and the President should have the advice and consent of Congress, joining its will and that of the American people to his. . . ."

McGee's rejoinder was that there had been adequate action by Congress and he did not think further action was needed.

Gruening said that by voting for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution Congress had approved the conduct of an unauthorized war in Southeast Asia, and it would be "superfluous" to take further action. "I deeply feel," Gruening said, "that what we are getting into is tragic. We are going to lose thousands of American lives in a war that we are not going to win ultimately, that is going to have to be settled at the conference table, as was the Korean war."[19]

In a news conference on June 17, 1965, President Johnson was asked a question that may have been pre-arranged: In view of increasing U.S. involvement in Vietnam, would he go back to Congress for "another resolution of support"? Reading from various provisions of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, he replied that the resolution was "just an expression and they just approved the position that we were taking." ". . . the authority of the President is very clear and unquestioned without a resolution," he said. "The Commander in Chief has all the authority that I am exercising. But because of my desire to have the support of the Congress and to have them a part of any decision we make after consulting their leadership, exchanging viewpoints, and carefully drawing a resolution, we submitted to the Congress language [the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution] we thought would make it clear for all time, to one and all."[20]

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[19] See also the speech by Dodd later that same day in which he supported the President and criticized the press.

Toward the end of June 1965, Senator Javits introduced the text of a proposed new resolution. Co-sponsored by Senator Jennings Randolph (D/W. Va.), it would have authorized the President "to take all necessary steps, including the use of armed force," (language from the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution), to help the South Vietnamese or any other member or protocol state of SEATO to defend their freedom.[21]

Javits proposed implementing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution by specifying in the new resolution the following U.S. objectives:

> The United States affirms that the objectives of the United States are to bring about the cessation of hostilities by cease-fire or other appropriate means and the restoration of peace, tranquility, and security, and the observance of international treaties and agreements in South Vietnam, and to assist South Vietnam in obtaining a full opportunity for self-determination, religious freedom, economic and social progress, the establishment and strengthening of free institutions, and the enjoyment of friendly relations with its neighbors.

The resolution also contained language specifically recognizing the interest of the U.S. in a negotiated settlement:

> The United States is ready, whenever and wherever there is any willingness by the other appropriate parties to do so, to undertake honorable negotiations to attain these objectives.

In introducing the new resolution, Javits said that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was "out of date." "It was passed under wholly different circumstances, at a time when we were not bombing North Vietnam as part of the defense against the Vietcong, when the South Vietnamese Government looked relatively stable under General Khanh, and when we were there at the request of such a government. The likelihood then of direct U.S. involvement in ground combat in a large-scale struggle on the Asian mainland was not anticipated; we were not then on the verge of committing ourselves to such a conflict."

A new resolution was also needed, Javits said, because the decisions being made by the President were "crucial":

> The real question is not whether we are willing to send another 21,000 troops to Vietnam to help the South Vietnamese during this summer's monsoon rains. It is whether we are prepared to send some hundreds of thousands of our troops into combat, as we did in Korea, if necessary—for it may become necessary. It is whether we are ready to face the American casualties of a long, drawn-out land struggle—for we may have to.

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[20] *Public Papers of the Presidents,* Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, p. 680.

[21] *CR,* vol. 111, pp. 14636-14638.

> It is whether we are prepared to risk a confrontation with Communist China or the Soviet Union, for we may have to.
>
> The President may have the legal authority to make these decisions, but as a matter of policy they should not be made by him alone, without congressional approval and support.
>
> The President should not risk leading the Nation, step by step, into a major conflict from which there is no honorable retreat—not without a clear mandate from the people and a united and determined country solidly behind him. An out-of-date resolution—and that is what the resolution of August 1964 is, is not enough. Neither is a Gallup poll.

Congressional consideration of a new resolution, Javits said, would "provide a clear opportunity for the Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs Committees to hold hearings in an attempt to bring out the relevant facts and clarify the issues, and an opportunity, too, for full debate on the floor of both Houses—not undirected, sporadic debate . . . but debate focused on specific language, carrying the responsibility of positive action."

Moreover, such consideration by Congress could help to develop answers to important pending questions:

> First. What is the exact nature and extent of the new combat responsibilities our forces are assuming in Vietnam?
>
> Second. What is the nature and area of the conflict as now contemplated?
>
> Third. Is it clear that the people of South Vietnam still want us there? That is a very critically important question.
>
> Fourth. At whose invitation are we now participating in the struggle there?
>
> Fifth. What do the people of southeast Asia and other parts of Asia think about the escalation of our involvement in this conflict?
>
> Sixth. How much help are we getting from our allies, especially our SEATO allies, and what is the likelihood of getting more help?
>
> Seventh. What practical possibilities exist of regional or United Nations action with respect to Vietnam? We hear a great deal about the Secretary General going out there. What, indeed, can the U.N. do? Let us remember that when the Security Council voted to undertake the responsibility of the conflict against the North Koreans, the Russians, for the moment, were not on the Security Council, and therefore not able to cast a vote.
>
> Eighth. How much help are the Communists getting and where is it coming from?
>
> . . . There are many others of equal importance to be answered. Indeed, one of the most vital questions is this: What do we expect to gain from a decision to commit increasing numbers of U.S. troops to ground combat roles?

When the administration heard that Javits was going to offer the resolution, it took steps to make sure that the proposal would not be considered. In a memorandum to the President on June 23, Rusk said he had discussed the Javits proposal with Fulbright, and "His [Fulbright's] first reaction was that it was not likely to attract much attention and that he interpreted it as a basis for a speech on the subject with little other consequence." Rusk recommended to the President that the administration urge Mansfield to have the resolution referred to the Foreign Relations Committee. In a meeting of the NSC later that day, the Javits proposal was discussed, and the President and his associates apparently agreed with Rusk's proposal as to how it should be handled.[22]

Accordingly, as Rusk had proposed, when the Javits resolution was introduced it was referred to the Foreign Relations Committee, where, as predicted, it was shelved and no further action was taken.[23]

Discussion of the Westmoreland Request Continues

On June 10, 1965, the President met from 10:35 a.m. to 1:05 p.m. with Taylor, Rusk, Ball, McNamara, Vance, Raborn, McGeorge Bundy, William Bundy, Helms, and General Wheeler to continue the consideration of Westmoreland's request.[24] Reedy and Moyers were also present. The President also invited his old friend and mentor, Senator Russell, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, to attend the meeting. For Russell's benefit, each of the principal advisers was asked to state his position. Again, McNamara and Rusk said that they favored raising the total of U.S. troops to 100,000 and that the top men in their departments agreed. Taylor said he also agreed, but he added: "We should get in rapidly the forces that can be effective in Monsoon season."[25] McNamara called it a "plan to cover us to end of year."[26] The President asked Taylor, "Why must we do it [send more troops]?" and Taylor replied: "If we don't, we may lose some territory." The President: "Don't you think it will be read as land war in Asia?" Taylor: "We have to explain this is not a Korean war."[27] Raborn said: "We [CIA] believe in the buildup—faster the better."[28] McNamara said that the question was, "Where are you [the military] taking us?" whereupon the President said: "Therefore?" McNamara replied: "I'd recommend more explanation."[29]

The President asked a series of questions: "What is the answer to the argument that bombing has had no results?" Rusk replied: "We never thought it would bring them running. It has had a good effect on military and civilian efforts." And, Taylor added, "effect on civilians in the North." Raborn said he fully agreed. The President commented that, "*His* reason for going North was to save morale in the South."[30] (emphasis in original)

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[22] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[23] On July 7, 1965. Javits and Randolph wrote to Fulbright to request committee hearings on their resolution. Fulbright replied on July 13 that the committee had discussed the matter at an executive session on July 12, and had decided not to hold hearings on the resolution "at this time." Noting that the committee had reviewed the situation in Vietnam in executive session eleven times since Jan. 1965, he said, "The Committee expects to keep itself constantly and currently informed on developments in Vietnam." National Archives, RG 46, Marcy Chron File.

[24] Apparently the only notes of this meeting were those kept by William Bundy, which he used in his manuscript, and which are still in his possession, and by McGeorge Bundy, which are in his handwritten papers in the Johnson Library. Except where indicated, the quotations used here are from the William Bundy MS., ch. 26.

[25] McGeorge Bundy notes.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] *Ibid.*

[29] *Ibid.*

[30] *Ibid.*

Another question was whether the administration had told Congress about the combat role of U.S. forces. Rusk replied that White House briefings of Members of Congress, plus his and McNamara's testimony before congressional committees, had made it clear that U.S. forces were being deployed where combat was likely if not inevitable.

The President asked, "Is there any question about our authority?" "None," replied Rusk, citing the powers of the Commander in Chief as well as the SEATO Treaty and the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

Other questions from the President and the answers given by his advisers were summarized several years later by William Bundy based on his notes of the meeting:[31]

> Q. Would any more forces be needed after the 100,000?
>
> A. This was the maximum that could be used on the reserve-reaction basis [i.e., U.S. troops would be held in reserve, and used to react to Communist attacks when needed to assist South Vietnamese forces]. But we might later find we had to do more on general grounds, that is, if the situation was worse on a widespread basis.
>
> Q. What solution do you see? [In the President's words, "Will this lead to more? How do we extricate ourselves?"][32]
>
> A. If we can stalemate the VC, and keep the North under pressure, there is hope.
>
> Q. What is our objective?
>
> A. Here there were divergent answers. A true "stalemate in the South" was put forward—and challenged as requiring more American forces than were proposed. A bargaining position in which there were "some prospects" that South Vietnam would have self-determination was put forward—and contested as probably inadequate, and certainly not remotely attained at that point. If American forces were pulled back to narrow enclaves, the countryside would be handed over to the VC, and Hanoi's willingness to negotiate would be all the greater. Finally, Ball summed up his own sense: we had only a short-range objective of holding on during the adverse monsoon season, to October 1st or so, and then seeing what the hopes and possibilities were. It was a fair summary.
>
> Q. Is there any stone unturned on the negotiating front?
>
> A. The chief one would be dealings with the NLF, but this would entail great risks of leaking and causing a heavy blow in Saigon in return for no significant prospect of gain. Hanoi was still in charge. To Rusk in particular such proposals as dealing with the NLF were really a cover for defeat.

Thus, said William Bundy, the group's "first reaction" to the question posed by Westmoreland's request was, "Let's hang on through the summer, with a modest increase, if we possibly can—and even if we can't see clearly beyond that."

Senator Russell apparently did not agree. "He spoke only briefly," Bundy says, "and drily. Driblets were not the answer. . . . He would like a way out, but did not see one that would keep our word."[33]

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[31] Bundy MS., ch. 26, pp. 12-14.

[32] McGeorge Bundy notes.

According to William Bundy, the group also discussed how the President's decision on Westmoreland's request should be presented to Congress, but he does not give any details on what was said.[34] According to McGeorge Bundy's notes, Rusk said that it would be dangerous to have a full-fledged debate. "The Communists would use their whole apparatus to stir up trouble, which might have serious international results."

The President also read to the group from Mansfield's memorandum of June 9, and, according to McGeorge Bundy's notes, it was "answered line by line."

In conjunction with the meeting on June 10 as well as another on June 11, the President received written legal opinions from the Departments of Justice, State, and Defense, all of which concluded that he had the power, independent of Congress, to send U.S. forces into combat in Vietnam.

The memorandum on June 11 from Leonard Meeker, State's Legal Adviser, concluded, as Meeker had asserted in his memorandum on March 8, 1965, that the President had full power to use U.S. forces in combat. He added, however, that although there was no requirement even to consult Congress, ". . . the record shows that the [Gulf of Tonkin] Resolution was passed on the understanding that there would be consultation with the Congress 'in case a major change in present policy becomes necessary.' The committing of an additional 43,000 United States forces to South Vietnam with combat missions included in their assignment, could be argued to constitute a policy decision calling for Congressional consultation. Consultation would not require new affirmative action by the Congress, but would afford the Congress an opportunity for review."[35]

Attorney General Katzenbach concluded in a memorandum on June 10, as he stated in the NSC meeting on June 11, that the President had the power under the Constitution to use the armed forces in combat, and did not need approval from Congress "at this time" to undertake military action in Vietnam.[36] (He did not comment on whether approval might be needed at some later time.) He, too, pointed out that there was some legislative history to indicate that in passing the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution Congress did not intend to approve a large-scale land war in Asia. Katzenbach added, however, that this would not be applicable to the "limited measures now contemplated," which did not involve military action of that magnitude. (Like Meeker, Katzenbach had been asked to comment on whether further congressional approval was necessary for increasing the number of troops to about 95,000, and his comments were directed to an increase of that magnitude.) "The commitment involved is certainly far less than all-out war, and the likelihood of involving the United States in all-out war as a result of the proposed moves . . . is relatively slight in view of the limitations on both the size of the force committed and the nature of the mission."

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[33] According to McGeorge Bundy's notes, Russell, said "how to get us out and save face." In a speech in Georgia three days later (which was printed in *CR*, vol. III, p. 13677), Russell said: " . . it was a mistake to get involved there [Vietnam] in the first place; I have never been able to see any strategic, political, or economic advantage to be gained by our involvement. Most of the military leaders whose knowledge and advice I most respect have warned repeatedly that it would be an incalculable mistake for the United States to engage in a full-scale land war on the Asian mainland. . . . Whether or not the initial decision was a mistake is now moot. The United States does have a commitment in South Vietnam. The flag is there. U.S. honor and prestige are there. And, most important of all, U.S. soldiers are there."

[34] Bundy MS., ch. 26, p. 14.

[35] Johnson Library, NFS NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Leonard Meeker, "Memorandum of Law," June 11, 1965. For the memorandum from the Department of Defense on June 10, 1965, see NSF Country File, Vietnam 7B (Legality).

[36] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

Katzenbach also warned that the President was in a better position to exercise his constitutional powers without constraint or restraint if he did not ask Congress for approval, whereas if he asked Congress for approval and Congress agreed but attached conditions, he might thereby be limited in what he could do:

> On many occasions the President has asked for Congressional approval of his action. When Congress responds to such a request the strictly legal effects of its action, if short of a declaration of war, are likely to be to limit rather than extend his authority. In the absence of Congressional action, the President's legal position is sustainable so long as it is consistent with the Constitution, *i.e.*, so long as his action does not amount to an infringement of the power of Congress to declare all-out war. There is authority, however, indicating that in areas where both Executive and Congressional powers are operative, the Executive must observe the limits of any Congressional authorization that may be enacted even though, in the absence of any authorization, his Executive powers under the Constitution would clearly go beyond the Congressional grant. . . . The Congressional authorization obviously can serve indispensable political purposes and it may serve to allay the legal doubts of narrow obstructionists. These advantages must be weighed, however, against the legal limitations that may be effectively imposed by a Congressional authorization and its legislative history.

On June 11, McGeorge Bundy and James Thomson sent the President a memorandum reviewing the debate on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. They concluded, as had Meeker, that although nothing in the resolution limited the President's use of the armed forces, "The Resolution was passed on the understanding that there would be consultation with the Congress 'in case a major change in present policy becomes necessary.' "[37]

On June 10, the President also received two intelligence memoranda analyzing U.S. options and estimating probable results. The first was on the effects of increasing U.S. forces in Vietnam to 150,000:[38]

> We believe that a US buildup itself, on the scale considered here would not alter VC/DRV determination to prosecute the

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[37] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam. On the same date, June 11, 1965, Thomson, who was increasingly opposed to U.S. policy in Vietnam, sent McGeorge Bundy a memorandum on "The Far East Costs of Our Vietnam Policy." Johnson Library, James Thomson, National Security Staff, McGeorge Bundy Chron File.

[38] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, "Reactions to a Further US Buildup in South Vietnam," Memorandum TS#185864-b, June 10, 1965. There is no indication on the face of this document as to the originating office, but presumably it was the Office of National Estimates.

> struggle. The Communists would recognize that, in military terms, their task had become harder. They would recognize that, in political terms, the US action reaffirmed its determination not to accept military defeat. But the arrival of US forces in these numbers would not change the Communists' basic calculation that their staying power is inherently superior to that of Saigon and Washington.
>
> The real test, then, would be that of combat. The Viet Cong would respond, as it has to past injections of US forces, by stepping up the insurgency, and the DRV would reinforce it as necessary with men and equipment, including further line units of the PAVN. In this effort, the Communists would probably hold to their present strategy of attrition and subversion, although on a significantly increased scale. They would still seek to defeat the GVN through exhaustion and internal collapse without letting US/GVN forces engage them in decisive battle.

The memorandum concluded:

> We do not know how the test of combat would come out at the level of US involvement now being considered. If, at this or some higher level, the tide of battle runs against the Viet Cong for a substantial period, the Communists would probably consider a large-scale ground offensive by DRV troops. They would recognize, however, that the enlarged US forces had made this more difficult. They would also fear that the US, with a very heavy stake in the war, would not accept defeat in that new kind of war without expanding it to the DRV and China. In these circumstances, they would probably prefer to resort to negotiations or simply to let the fighting subside while conserving their own forces. They would be particularly likely to react in this way if they had become convinced that in any enlarged war, the US would use nuclear weapons.

The second intelligence memorandum considered four options and their probable consequences (Option A corresponded to the 150,000 build-up considered by the previous intelligence memorandum of June 10):[39]

> OPTION A
>
> *Course of Action:* To continue with essentially our present course and objectives: that is, to bomb selected targets in the DRV (but not population centers, economic targets, SAM sites, and jet-capable airfields in the Hanoi-Haiphong area), and to build up US combat strength considerably in the South. . . .
>
> *Consequences:* In our view, this will probably not permit us to impose our will on the enemy. The DRV would continue to reinforce the VC, and we doubt that US/ARVN forces could soon produce any decisive improvement in the military situation. The most likely results would be heavy US casualties, an over-emphasis on the military aspects of the conflict to the detriment of the political, and bogging-down of the war at higher levels of commitment and intensity, and, perhaps ultimately, a petering out of GVN/ARVN determination and intensity.

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[39] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, "US Options and Objectives in Vietnam," Memorandum TS#185865-a, June 10, 1965. The originating office presumably was the Office of National Estimates.

OPTION B

Course of Action: To continue to increase US forces to the extent necessary to defeat the Viet Cong, to increase sharply our weight of attack on the DRV, bombing virtually all targets; to impose a naval quarantine; to accept further difficulties with the USSR and the possibility of major hostilities with Communist China. . . .

Consequences: This would risk convincing the Communists that the US intended to destroy the DRV regime and thus bring us close to the "flash-point" of Chinese Communist intervention. If they judged that the Hanoi regime was losing control of the country, they would probably enter the DRV unilaterally and might engage US air forces with their own.

OPTION C

Course of Action: To cease bombing in the North, to hold on in the South, and to seek to negotiate as good a Vietnam settlement as we can get. . . .

Consequences: US overtures for negotiation would probably be rejected and, the enemy, scenting a weakening in US determination, would probably fight on, while raising his terms. Also, a sudden US turning in this direction, without punishing the DRV above present levels, would have a seriously dispiriting effect upon non-Communists in Southeast Asia.

OPTION D

Course of Action: To increase our weight of attack on the DRV; to increase US forces up to the 70,000 man strength already authorized; and, most importantly, to place major stress on a program of political, social, and economic action in South Vietnam. . . .

Consequences: Though Option D also has its drawbacks, it has the following relative merits:

> a. Heightened US pressure on North Vietnam would increase the difficulty of supporting the Viet Cong and make Hanoi pay an ever heavier price for continuing that support. Furthermore, it would demonstrate our willingness to accept heightened political risks.
>
> b. It would involve the deployment of substantial US ground forces in the South—a prime requirement for the immediate future. Further, it would not convey to the GVN/ARVN the notion that the US was taking over the war.
>
> c. It would give the US time and opportunity to increase the civic action, political, paramilitary, local defense, and administrative improvements which are needed to create a viable non-Communist state in the South.
>
> d. The net effect of the foregoing would have some chance of persuading the DRV that time was no longer running their way and that they should move to negotiate.
>
> e. The US would avoid the negative reactions abroad and at home which would be produced by all-out bombings of the DRV and ever-increasing US troop commitments.

On June 11, the CIA sent the White House a summary of 12 intelligence estimates made during the previous year which concluded:[40] "The general proposition is that the Communists will try to restrain further expansion of military conflict—if only because they are doing well in conflict on the present scale."

On June 11, there was a meeting of the NSC from 12:16 p.m. to 1:20 p.m. as the review of Westmoreland's request continued. Present were the President, Rusk, McNamara, Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Taylor, Raborn, William Bundy, McNaughton, General Wheeler, U.N. Ambassador Adlai Stevenson, A.I.D. Administrator David Bell, Secretary of the Treasury Fowler, Attorney General Katzenbach, USIA Director Rowan, and Reedy, Cater and Smith from the White House and NSC staffs. The President began by observing that the U.S. had a treaty obligation to which it was committed and which it would keep.[41] "We should seek ways of holding the situation," he said, "so that we can carry out what we are committed to do." Taylor then spoke: "With more U.S. combat troops and more U.S. airpower the hope is that we will be able to push Hanoi into negotiations." The justification for these additional troops, he said, was the decline in the ratio of South Vietnamese forces to those of the Communists, from 5.4 to 1 to 3.9 to 1, a development that had been mentioned at various points during Washington discussions in late May-early June.

Rusk then discussed the negotiating situation:

> We have . . . 13 channels which have been used to probe enemy intentions. There are now few tracks open or operating. A Geneva type conference proposal is still alive. One thought would be to have the seventeen ["non-aligned"] nations issue invitations to a conference of governments for talks without preconditions. The other side will turn down such a proposal, awaiting the outcome of the monsoon campaign.
>
> Today we see no possibility of talks. Although we are alert to all tracks, none appear promising. We should not be too timid about the present U.S. position on North Vietnam. We have more support than the Communists say we have.

Adlai Stevenson, U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., said, "The UN Secretary General should be asked to call for a ceasefire during negotiations. The Secretary General's proposal would probably be turned down by Hanoi. Even so, taking this initiative would prove that we have tried everything." The President replied: "This proposal should be explored with Secretary Rusk. When we tried a bombing pause, I didn't believe it would work, and it didn't. It did relieve the pressure of public opinion."

McNamara then reviewed Westmoreland's request, and General Wheeler stated that the Joint Chiefs supported the full request.[42]

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[40] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces. For the text of this paper see Appendix I, below.

[41] Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings File, Summary Notes of the 552nd NSC meeting, June 11, 1965, by Bromley Smith.

[42] On June 11, the JCS sent a memorandum to McNamara supporting Westmoreland's request. "There are significant indications," the memorandum said, "that the communists may be on the threshold of moving the conflict in Southeast Asia to a new and higher level of intensity." "The Joint Chiefs of Staff consider that the ground forces situation requires a substantial build-up of US and Allied forces in the RVN, at the most rapid rate feasible on an orderly basis." In addition, the JCS recommended increased air action against North Vietnam. Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, "US/Allied Troop Deployments to South Vietnam (SVN)," JCSM-457-65, June 11, 1965.

Attorney General Katzenbach summarized the legal situation: "There is no doubt of our legal position to increase force deployments in Vietnam. It is doubtful that we should go back to Congress to get additional authority every time we take a new action. The President already has, under the Constitution, all the power he needs to deploy additional forces abroad."

The President concluded the meeting by saying, "We must delay and deter the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong as much as we can, and as simply as we can, without going all out. When we grant General Westmoreland's request, it means that we get in deeper and it is harder to get out. They think they are winning and we think they are. We must determine which course gives us the maximum protection at the least cost."

That same day (June 11), after the NSC meeting, a joint State-CIA cable was sent to the U.S. Mission in Saigon stating that while State and CIA generally agreed with Westmoreland's assessment of the seriousness of the military situation in his cable of June 7, they had not concluded from Mission reports that there was a serious danger of a military collapse in a relatively short period of time.[43] Westmoreland replied on June 13 that in his "considered opinion" the South Vietnamese "cannot stand up to this pressure without substantial US combat support on the ground." U.S. troops, he said, could "contribute heavily" toward protecting the Vietnamese against large military forces, but "security from the guerrilla, the assassin, the terrorist and the informer" could come only from the Vietnamese themselves. "There is no doubt whatsoever that the insurgency in South Vietnam must eventually be defeated among the people in the hamlets and towns." ". . . [M]y concept," Westmoreland added, "is basically to employ US forces, together with Vietnamese Airborne and Marine Battalions of the general reserve against the hardcore DRV/VC forces in reaction and search and destroy operations, and thus permit the concentration of Vietnamese troops in the heavily populated areas along the coast, around Saigon and in the Delta."[44]

On June 17, Taylor confirmed that the military situation was serious,[45] and on June 18 he told Washington that Westmoreland's estimate of the military situation was an accurate presentation of Westmoreland's own views, and that, "There was no intent . . . to state or to imply 'that there is a serious danger of complete military collapse within a relatively short period of time.' "[46]

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[43] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Washington to Saigon 2873, June 11, 1965.

Larry Berman (*The Planning of a Tragedy*, p. 69) states that, "Given the extensive documentation of mission reports quoted earlier in this book, it is somewhat bewildering that Secretary Rusk should cross-examine mission intelligence estimates." In all probability, Rusk, in whose name the cable was sent in keeping with the practice of sending many cables from the State Department in the name of the Secretary of State, had no involvement with or even knowledge of the cable, which was drafted by State's Far East Intelligence Office (INR/RFE) and cleared by the Far East Bureau, the Office of the Executive Secretary of the State Department, and the CIA and DIA.

[44] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, MACV to CINCPAC 131515Z, June 1965, "Concept of Operations—Force Requirements and Deployments, SVN." The cable was reprinted in *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. IV, pp. 606-609.

[45] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Saigon to Washington 4220, June 17, 1965.

[46] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 4265, June 18, 1965.

Taylor and Deputy U.S. Ambassador U. Alexis Johnson did not think that the situation was as serious as stated by Westmoreland, however, and they were still opposed to large-scale U.S. troop involvement. This was reflected in McNaughton's report of a meeting he had on June 25 with U. Alexis Johnson, in which Johnson said that the situation was probably no more serious than the year before. "Even if it were more serious, he went on, massive input of U.S. troops was unlikely to make much difference. The best they could do would be to hold a few enclaves . . . the Vietnamese were afraid they would lose authority if more U.S. troops were brought in. He advised that the U.S. allow the forces already in the country to settle. After some experimentation with them, the way would be much clearer. Once in, troops could not, without difficulty, be taken out again."[47]

Ky and Thieu Assume Power

While U.S. officials were considering Westmoreland's request for large-scale forces, the political crisis that had developed in Saigon in late May led to Quat's resignation on June 12.[48] On June 9, Quat had asked the military to mediate the dispute in which Chief of State Suu had refused to let him replace two Cabinet ministers. Led by General Ky, the military decided that both Quat and Suu should step down and that the armed forces should be returned to power in order to establish a "revolutionary government" capable of acting more vigorously. Executive power would be exercised by a Central Executive Council of 14 members responsible to a National Leadership Committee of ten: the head of the Central Executive Committee, the commanding generals of the four corps areas plus a fifth corps for the area around Saigon, and the commanders of the air force, the navy and the marines and paratroops. Final authority would rest with the Congress of the Armed Forces (the equivalent of the Armed Forces Council which had been abolished in May), composed of ranking military officers.

When South Vietnamese military leaders met on the afternoon of June 11 to discuss this new plan which Ky and a small group of military officers and civilians had been developing, they asked General Thi, commander of I Corps (the northern provinces), who was strongly supported by the Buddhists but, partly for this reason, was not acceptable to the Americans, to head the Central Executive Council. Thi, aware of American opposition, declined the post, as did Thieu, a Catholic, who was favored by the U.S. but who understood that his appointment would rile the Buddhists. Ky, a nominal Buddhist, was then selected to head the Central Executive Council, which was the equivalent of Quat's position as Premier, and Thieu became Chairman of the National Leadership Committee. General Nguyen Huu Co was named Defense Minister.

In the meeting at which these decisions were made, Thieu was reported to have said that Quat's government had done its best and could not be blamed for recent difficulties. "The problem confronting each and every one of us," he said, "is not the so-called constitutional crisis. Neither is it one of finding a compromise between the opposing factions. The problem to be solved should be considered in a much larger context so as to 'find a basic solution for all the ills of the country.'" Thieu, Ky, and Thi said that the armed forces ". . . do not want to assume the reins of government for all of us are busy with the war. But the time has come when something must be done to bring the country out of its present stalemate."[49]

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[47] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. III, p. 472, from McNaughton, Memorandum of Conversation, June 26, 1965, with U. Alexis Johnson on June 25, 1965.

[48] Useful sources are U. Alexis Johnson, *The Right Hand of Power*, pp. 435-437; Bui Diem, *In the Jaws of History*, pp. 145-147; Kahin, *Intervention*, pp. 343-345.

It was agreed that the new government would inaugurate its program with a "No Breathing Week" (the term used in a CIA cable reporting on the new program), during which the following would be carried out:[50]

A. Suspension of civil liberties.
B. Promulgation of revolutionary laws.
C. Creation of a revolutionary court.
D. Execution of at least five people to include at least two corrupt government administrators, two black marketeers, one Viet Cong.
E. Severe censorship, closing down many newspapers.
F. Remission of taxes in the central provinces which suffered flood damage.
G. Closing of banks and a survey of national financial resources.
H. Cessation of importation of all goods except defense materials, aid supplies, and goods which generate counterpart funds.
I. Severance of diplomatic relations with Cambodia and France.
J. Announcement of refusal to attend Afro-Asia Conference.
K. Nationalization of some French firms, excepting rubber plantations.
L. Institution of a survey of wealthy citizens, specifically Chinese merchants and high-ranking Vietnamese officers.
M. A survey of Saigon housing, electricity, and water distribution to correct inequities.

Following "No Breathing Week," the government would stage "popular demonstrations" in support of the revolution. "'Out' politicians are to be relegated to a 'village of old trees' at Vung Tau. They would conduct seminars and draw up plans and programs in support of government policy."

The question of religious and political party opposition was discussed, ". . . and it was decided to ignore such opposition groups with the stipulation that 'troublemakers will be shot.'"

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[49] CMH, 4-page undated and unsigned memorandum describing the meeting of June 11, 1965. Buddhist leader Thich Tri Quang, who had supported Quat, told John Negroponte, U.S. Consul in Hue, in a conversation on June 11 which Tri Quang initiated, that if Quat could not survive without concessions to his opponents, he (Tri Quang) favored a resumption of military rule. He said that the military should declare a state of emergency in order to fight the war more vigorously. At the end of one year, a national assembly should be established and the state of emergency lifted. U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 4162, June 12, 1965.

[50] U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Central File, Intelligence Information Cable TDCS DB-315/02022-65, June 11, 1965, "Military Plans for a Revolutionary Government to Replace the Present Government of South Vietnam."

According to a CIA report on the meetings in which these decisions were made,[51] "The framers of this revolutionary government anticipate difficulty in obtaining international recognition. They concluded that the United States would be initially opposed but would be compelled by circumstances to acquiesce and recognize the new government, after which its allies would follow suit."

As predicted, the U.S. did acquiesce in the resumption of military rule, but while there had been relief that Thi had declined the post of Premier, there was general dismay that Ky had been selected. In a report to Washington on a conversation with Bui Diem, Taylor, who had just returned to Saigon, said: "His [Bui Diem's] evaluation of Ky is about like ours—a flamboyant, dashing soldier with good intentions of unimpeachable patriotism but woefully weak in experience and political judgment."[52]

Several days later, however, after the Ky government assumed office on June 19, Taylor, who, along with U. Alexis Johnson and his other associates had been actively involved in advising the new government leaders, cabled Washington that, "On the whole, the new cabinet seems a very good one by Vietnamese standards and potentiality," and that Ky would be ". . . under the control of his military peers. There is nothing of importance which he can do as Prime Minister without the approval of the directory of ten officers [the National Leadership Committee] presided over by General Thieu. It looks as if this new government will be far more of an oligarchy than an autocracy."[53]

One of the first actions of the U.S. in dealing with the new government was to encourage it to issue its own four-point declaration of principles for a settlement of the war as a counter to the Four Point program of the North Vietnamese. The South Vietnamese program, originated by and drafted in William Bundy's office,[54] and announced in a speech on June 22 by South Vietnamese Foreign Minister Tran Van Do, was, in summary, as follows:[55]

> 1. North Vietnam must stop its aggression, dissolve its puppet organization in South Vietnam, and withdraw its troops and cadres from that country.
> 2. South Vietnam can then decide its own future, through democratic processes.
> 3. Friendly foreign military forces can also then be withdrawn from South Vietnam, but South Vietnam reserves the right to call them back in case of renewed aggression.
> 4. There must be an effective guaranty of the independence of the South Vietnamese people.

The U.S., which considered many of the provisions of "No Breathing Week" to be too harsh, was also anxious to have the Ky government present a more constructive domestic political program. This subject had been discussed in Washington at the time the change of the government was occurring. During his visit on June 7-12, Taylor met with Acheson, and then with Acheson, Ball, McGeorge Bundy and William Bundy, to discuss the Acheson (Acheson-Ball) plan, which had been eclipsed by the worsening military and political situation and by Westmoreland's request for troops, but the general idea of which apparently continued to have some appeal. It was agreed that the plan would be applicable only if the North Vietnamese became convinced that they could not win with the tactics they were using, and it was further agreed that a paper would be prepared suggesting a political and economic program which the South Vietnamese could use to induce the Communists to rally to the government.[56]

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[51] *Ibid.*

[52] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington 4206, June 15, 1965. Several days later, Bui Diem was appointed by Ky to a post of special assistant for planning and foreign aid. See Bui Diem, *In the Jaws of History,* p. 148.

[53] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 4336, June 22, 1965.

[54] In a cable to the U.S. Mission in Saigon on June 11, (Washington to Saigon 2874, same location), the State Department suggested a six-point program which, after some revisions, became the Four Point program.

[55] This summary was contained in a cable from Washington to all diplomatic and consular posts, Airgram Ca-196, July 7, 1965, U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S.

On June 11, Leonard Unger, (Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Far East), sent Ball a memorandum on a proposed statement by the new South Vietnamese Prime Minister for a plan for political resolution and reconstruction.[57] (There is no indication as to whether this was the paper agreed upon at the meeting with Taylor.) Unger, who also sent Ball a draft of the proposed statement, said that its purpose would be, ". . . to provide a clear satement of national goals and to present to the people a new picture of their Government as one primarily concerned with their interests and welfare . . . [and] to undermine Viet Cong propaganda in Vietnam and to improve the image of the GVN around the world. An additional and more specific objective would be to encourage personnel of the Viet Cong to end their particpation in the insurgency."

In the proposed statement, the Prime Minister, after describing the situation, would emphasize that "despite the struggle forced on the South by the North's aggression," the objective of the South Vietnamese Government "remains peace and reconciliation." To this end, the Prime Minister would announce certain "first bold steps toward peace and national reconciliation and reconstruction," as follows:

(1) "Immediate resumption of constitutional government," with elections in October 1965 to choose a constitution assembly to prepare a new constitution for South Vietnam;

(2) An amnesty and full citizenship for former Communists who would lay down their arms;

(3) A reaffirmation by the Government of its authority throughout the country;

(4) An economic and social program with special emphasis on expansion of education and medical care, as well as land and agricultural credit reform;

(5) Withdrawal of foreign troops when "foreign interference" ended and security was restored.

The Prime Minister would also announce a two-week cessation of attacks on North Vietnam and of "military initiatives" against Communist forces in the South in the hope that this would

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[56] U.S. National Defense University, Maxwell Taylor Papers, notes from his diary.

[57] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 74 D 272.

". . . find a response in an end to interference from the North and Viet Cong attacks and terror."

Finally, he would declare his government's willingness to enter into negotiations with any government, and eventual discussions with the North Vietnamese on trade and other contacts, as well as the relationship of the two parts of the country to each other.

Unger proposed that the speech be made in several months, "against a background of improved military fortunes or at least a stabilized military situation."

On June 18, Chester Cooper sent McGeorge Bundy a memorandum, "New Political Initiatives," suggesting various points which such a program should include.[58] "There is much talk," he said, "about its [the Ky-Thieu government] being a 'revolutionary' government. Well and good. But a Revolutionary Government should undertake more than draconian measures against black marketeers; it should demonstrate its readiness and ability to take some radical steps to improve the welfare and to meet the aspirations of the people." He added: "We have been very patient with the various governments and ministers of South Vietnam—perhaps, in the light of our own commitment, too patient. The time may well have come to decide what we want them to do and, with all due politesse, make sure they do it."[59]

A few days later, the Ky government issued a "Twenty-Six Point Program of Action." In a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy on June 29, with which he enclosed the text of the program,[60] Cooper

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[58] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[59] On June 24, 1965, W. W. Rostow made a similar proposal in a memorandum to Rusk, "A Political Counteroffensive from Saigon." Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam. McGeorge Bundy, who received a copy, sent it to Cooper with a note saying, "WWR is right in principle. How do we get the practice going?" Cooper replied on June 29 (same location) that the U.S. role should be to help the South Vietnamese carry out their own revolutionary program, and he suggested, as had Rostow, that a small group should be attached to the U.S. Mission "to act as marriage brokers between our formidable operations and officials and the nervous, inexperienced GVN counterparts."

[60] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

This was the text of the South Vietnamese 26-point program which Cooper sent to McGeorge Bundy:

"A. *In the military and diplomatic fields,* the guiding principle consists of mobilizing all the resources of the nation in order to defeat the communist aggressors, and sacrificing all personal and collective interests for the sake of the people. The five urgent steps to be taken in this field include:

"1. To launch a nation-wide campaign in which all the people will enthusiastically strive to kill the enemy. To this end people in the rear will be organized in groups; and will be given appropriate work so that every one can contribute positively toward the consolidation of the security and the extermination of the communists in each residential area, so as to relieve the heavy burden of the armed forces and thus allow them to throw all their efforts to the frontline.

"2. To give necessary training to people who still are able to fight so that every one of them can effectively fight the communists in the military, as well as in the ideological field. The training will also prepare the people to readily accept all revolutionary measures for the improvement of the society. As first steps toward the arming of the entire population people in certain areas will be armed first. Reserve units to serve in the rear will also be formed.

"3. To provide conditions, encouragement and positive help for people of all classes, especially young men and women, so that they can form among themselves volunteer groups to serve in the frontline, and take revolutionary measures aimed at improving the society.

"4. To implement correctly all measures aimed at enforcing the state of war, to step up the task of setting up special courts in the central area and in corps areas to try violators of the laws enforced during the period of state of war.

"5. To obtain a stronger solidarity and unity among the people and eliminate all individual or collective differences which have arisen during the recent period of crisis. To apply leniency measures towards those still being detained or investigated for charges other than direct or indirect oppression, exploitation or keeping of their fellow countrymen in a state of slavery. On the contrary, to deal severely with those who place their individual or collective interests and

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said that the program "is indeed revolutionary," and that it was "worth our attention, if only because it is *his* rather than *ours*." (emphasis in original) U.S. efforts to promote such activities, he said, usually had produced "little effect."

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vanity above the people's right to survive, and above the honor of their country, thus impairing the anti-communist resistance war and the process of social revolution.

"B. *In the economic and financial fields*, the guiding principles are: A regime of austerity for the government; the exercise of thrift by the people, consistent with the war economy and the requirements of a social revolution. All efforts must aim timely at halting any illegal profiteering; lowering the cost of living; and, at the same time, guaranteeing the increase of the national income. The following ten urgent measures are recommended:

"1. To firmly crack down on hoarders, speculators and black marketers. to strictly impose an official price scale. To organize control teams which will check stocks of food, other goods and raw material reserves being held by the businessmen in big and small cities. To encourage the youth, including girls, to participate in the above teams to best safeguard the people's interests. to severely punish the speculators, while sparing those needy people fooled by the speculators into acting as their tools. To help the latter reform themselves and actively participate in efforts to promote common prosperity.

"2. To give top priority to the movement of food and goods from the rural areas to the cities; to organize a rational distribution of goods from the cities to the rural areas. Best quality supplies must be insured for the central area.

"3. To control urgently all reserves of prime commodities and raw materials necessary for meeting the food, clothing, housing, travel and health requirements of the people.

"4. To set up an agency for the purchase, procurement and distribution of paddy [rice in the husk] and rice.

"5. Within the framework of a war economy, to request from people, who enjoy a high living standard, contributions proportionate to their capabilities.

"6. To increase the national budget's returns by imposing heavier taxes levied on non-essential goods, especially luxury goods. To increase import duties.

"7. To make use of the American aid in a more rational way. To start immediately discussions on the 1966 term of the American aid.

"8. To positively save the foreign exchange owned by the government. To forbid travel abroad. To select outstanding students for pursuing abroad branches of studies which are still wanting in the country. To take a census of youths studying abroad and call home students who pursue branches of studies already existing in the country.

"9. To set up immediately an agency for coordinating all economic activities, with the task to watch, control and guide all the state-run enterprises, and all the administrative agencies.

"10. To elaborate short-term economic development draft plans to be realized in 1966.

"C. *In the social welfare, educational and culture fields*, the guiding principle will consist of increasing patriotism, developing the national pride of the people of all classes, especially young people, and setting up vanguard groups for the implementation of revolutionary measures towards the improvement of the society.

"The seven urgent steps in this field include:

"1. To reconsider entirely the allowance system allotted to the families of those killed in the service of the nation, the war wounded, and the disabled, on the basis of an equitable compensation.

"2. To narrow the differences prevailing in the system of grades and salary scales, with regards to the civil servants and servicemen.

"3. To begin the enforcement of policies aimed at eradicating speculation on housing, lands, and slum clearance.

"4. To radically crack down on hoodlums, eradicate mendicancy and enlist vagabonds into wartime production.

"5. To readjust the educational system; revise and rewrite text books; open more schools, crowded residential areas. Draft plans for the training of teaching cadres and expansion of schools and universities.

"6. To organize high school and university students and youths into groups to be trained in revolutionary principles, simultaneous with military training.

"7. To encourage and give incentives to writers, publishers and artists who really serve the cause of the people, the revolution and society; help popularize their work among the population.

"D. *In the diplomatic field*, the guiding principle is to take the initiative in the international political arena; to explain to the friendly countries the progress achieved in our anti-communist struggle and the revolutionary efforts towards the betterment of society in the Republic of Vietnam.

"The four most urgent tasks recommended in this field are:

"1. Submit all the diplomatic personnel in the service and at embassies abroad to new tests to determine their abilities.

"2. Create centers on diplomatic activities in the principal foreign countries, namely in South America, Africa, Middle East and near the U.N. Headquarters.

"3. Supply all necessary documents in English and French, photographs and documentary films to make Vietnam better known abroad.

"4. Strive to induce the Vietnamese residents abroad to give support to, and participate in, the present revolutionary struggle in the country."

"The dominant theme of the program," Cooper said, "is mobilization and austerity. It is somewhat disturbing in the shrillness of its tone, but this is Ky's style and we had better learn to live with it."

Ten of the proposed actions, Cooper said, should be given "vigorous direct U.S. support . . . [or] assisted quietly and indirectly or covertly."[61] Six others should be left to the Vietnamese to carry out,[62] while two others should be discouraged.[63]

The remaining seven objectives,[64] Cooper said, dealt with the "ideological mobilization" of the people to support the new program, and in order for them to succeed "a strong and stable political base is essential. . . ." ". . . such a base," he added, "does not now exist," but Ky, "with luck and skill," might be able to stimulate the "revolutionary spirit" which would be required. He suggested that the CIA, with its experience in this field, should be given the task of supporting that aspect of Ky's program.

On July 1, Taylor sent Ky a five-page letter on the 26-point program which generally approved of the program and suggested how the U.S. might help with its implementation.[65]

Opinion in Congress

The general state of opinion in Congress in mid-June 1965 was described in an article by Tom Wicker in the *New York Times* on June 14, 1965, which said that a number of Democrats and some moderate Republicans in Congress were concerned about President Johnson's efforts to stifle debate, his high-handedness in making decisions, and his increasing reliance on a small group of advisers rather than the solicitation of advice from many sources.[66] Some Senators active in foreign affairs, the article said, ". . . remain concerned by what they regard as signs of 'tension and strain' in the President in recent anxious weeks, and they are irritated by his habit of lecturing them at length in private sessions. A typical meeting of that kind lasted four hours one morning recently, and on another occasion a leading Senator attempted to slip out unseen—only to be called back from the door by the President."

The article also pointed out that conservatives of both parties generally tended to approve of the President's actions in Vietnam, and that publicly he was gaining favor among Goldwater supporters while losing support among academics and liberal Democrats.

Congressional concerns about the war, as well as some of the differences of opinion within Congress, were revealed during the course of two executive sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the first on June 7, and the other on June 11. On June 7, the committee met to consider the President's request for an additional $89 million for Vietnam, some of which was to be used for the Southeast Asia (Mekong River) development program proposed in his April 7 Johns Hopkins' speech.[67] Senator Aiken was unusually assertive: "Mr. Chairman, I am afraid this is just another effort for the administration who got us in a mess over there to play it up before the whole world that the United States Senate is solidly behind anything the President wants to do."

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[61] These were numbers A-2, A-3, B-2, B-7, B-8, B-10, C-1, C-3, C-5, D-2, and D-3.

[62] These were numbers A-4, B-5, B-6, C-2, C-4, and D-1.

[63] These were numbers B-1 (the U.S. doubted the advisability or efficacy of using youth teams to inspect business inventories) and B-9 (a super administrative coordination agency "was simply beyond Vietnamese capabilities").

[64] These were numbers A-1, A-5, B-3, B-4, C-6, C-7, and D-4.

[65] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Saigon to Washington Airgram A-6, encl. no. 1, July 2, 1965.

[66] See also E. W. Kenworthy's article in the *New York Times*, June 6, 1965.

Aiken suggested that Congress give the $89 million directly to the President, rather than to the foreign aid agency (A.I.D.), and let him decide on its use "for either bashing them or buying them." ". . . this committee didn't get the United States in the mess it is in over there and I think the responsibility should be left where it belongs."

Senator Clark replied, "Mr. Chairman, if you do that you lose most of the psychological effect," to which Aiken retorted, "I think it is time this committee did exert its authority and not just tag along all the time and do whatever they ask us to do when we know some of the time they are dead wrong." Senator Church: "But, George [Aiken], we don't assert our authority by putting it in the contingency fund where the President can do anything he wants."

Fulbright's own reaction was that the proposed Southeast Asia development program was at least a possible alternative to a full-scale war. In an earlier session of the committee on June 3 to hear testimony on the $89 million request, he commented: "I am very regretful we are involved in it [Vietnam] at all if you want to come down to it basically. I am sorry we ever had anything to do with it. But that is all past. What do we do under the circumstances? It looks to me as if we are headed for a war unless we turn the emphasis around and give hope to some other solution regardless of how mistaken or right we have been in the past."[68]

On June 11, prior to the NSC meeting that day, Ambassador Taylor testified in a joint executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees.[69] There were sharp differences of opinion over U.S. policy in Vietnam. Senator Lausche supported the administration, as did Senator Stuart Symington (D/Mo.), former Secretary of the Air Force in the Truman administration and the only Senator who was a member of both committees, who told Taylor, ". . . we ought to move in and win this war or get out of it."

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[67] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, unpublished executive session transcript, June 7, 1965.

[68] When Aiken's suggestion of giving the funds directly to the President was put to a vote, it lost, 4-13, with Morse, Gore and John Williams joining Aiken in voting for it, and the committee then approved the requested $89 million. This amount, already approved by the House, was subsequently approved by the Senate and became law. For subsequent discussion of the $89 million request during Senate debate on the 1966 Foreign Assistance Authorization bill that same day, June 7, see *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 12726-12740.

The Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate rejected an administration request for an open-ended (unlimited) authorization in the 1966 Foreign Aid bill for funds for economic and military programs in Southeast Asia. According to the report of the committee, "Some members felt that the Committee on Foreign Relations had been inadequately consulted regarding developments in Vietnam, and that the furnishing of a 'blank check' to any Chief Executive would virtually deny the committee an effective role in the future." S. Rept. 89-170, p. 14. This request for open-ended authorization, which was approved by the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the House, was subsequently dropped in the House-Senate conference on the bill.

[69] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committees on Foreign Relations and Armed Services, unpublished executive session transcript, June 11, 1965.

Senator Stennis said that to prevent the war from being lost it was necessary for the U.S. to "take over" the winning of it, "even though I realize that is a loss itself, to lose the symbol, at least, of going through this other government."

Senator Henry M. Jackson (D/Wash.), concerned about deterring "wars of national liberation" wherever they might occur, commented, "Don't we have to make this kind of aggression unprofitable? This to me is the crucial thing. It is not just Vietnam. We have got this problem in South America lurking, we have got it in Africa."

Senator Hickenlooper, the ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee, said he thought there were two principal choices apart from unilateral withdrawal. One was to negotiate, which he favored but did not think would be successful, and the other was to ". . . destroy all reasonable vestiges of troublemaking in North Vietnam. . . . probably the destruction of Hanoi, probably the destruction of major ports along the seacoast, and their industrial complexes . . . bring them completely to their knees, to where they would not have the capacity to at least renew their subversive activities for a long period of time. . . ." "I am not necessarily advocating this," he said, "I am just thinking out loud—but to take the hazard of Chinese intervention and plaster them from the 17th parallel to the Chinese border, and virtually shooting anything that moves up there, just destroy them practically from the standpoint of any viable economy or any viable military operation. . . ." Otherwise, he said, "I don't see any conclusion. . . ." He added that he did not know whether, if North Vietnam could be brought to its knees, it was "worth it or not." Fulbright commented: "I don't know either. But I certainly don't subscribe to total destruction. . . . The intermediate one is the only one I can even contemplate. It is somewhere in between getting out and destroying it." Taylor said he would not go as far as Hickenlooper suggested: "I think we are on a course of action which may not succeed, but it is well worth giving it a good try."

During the meeting, Taylor told the committee that an additional 18,000 troops would be going to Vietnam, bringing the total of U.S. forces to about 70,000. This information did not seem to make much of an impression on the members of the committee, however. In an interview some years later, Taylor was asked whether he got any reaction. "No," he replied, "as I recall they thanked me and it didn't seem to strike them as it struck me later. Maybe they didn't realize the implications of it. Maybe they thought it was just a courteous gesture on the part of the President. I was told to do it 'inconspicuously.' How do you do something like that 'inconspicuously?' "[70]

In the same interview, Taylor was asked whether in 1965 at the time of his testimony he thought the U.S. commitment could be controlled, or whether he anticipated that it might grow to 500,000 men. "No, I never anticipated that [500,000]," he answered. "If anyone else did, you really didn't know it. It depended on the enemy. If he were smart, as we measured smartness, he should have known he shouldn't have hung on to this thing, that it would cost him too much. But he never had enough sense."

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[70] CRS Interview with Maxwell Taylor, Jan. 11, 1979.

On June 21, the Foreign Relations Committee discussed briefly a proposal which Senator Dodd had made in a letter to Fulbright a few days earlier in which he suggested that the committee send a bipartisan fact-finding mission to Vietnam to study and report on the situation.[71] Dodd, who had recently returned from a trip to Vietnam, said during the meeting that he had been urged by Ambassador Taylor and General Westmoreland, ". . . to try to get others to come over and take a look. . . . They didn't mention this Committee specifically but just members of the Senate and particularly newspaper people. . . . I was asked if I had any influence with some of them to try to get people like Walter Lippmann to take a trip over there. . . ."[72]

Mansfield's response to the proposal was that the Senate already had too much work to do. "I think, Tom," he told Dodd, "Taylor and Westmoreland are doing the best they can under the circumstances."

Fulbright commented: "I think if everybody went now they would be under such pressure to get back they would be there just for a day or two, have a drink at the bar and be briefed by the Ambassador and then come home."

Sensing that the committee did not favor Dodd's proposal, Fulbright said that the suggestion would be deferred.[73]

Efforts also were being made by a few liberals in the House to get the Foreign Affairs Committee to hold hearings on the situation in Vietnam. On June 3, 1965, for example, 28 liberals (including seven members of the Foreign Affairs Committee), mostly Democrats, led by Representative Benjamin Rosenthal, a committee member, urged the committee to hold such hearings, but, as in the case of a similar request in February 1965, no action was taken.

On June 14, 1965, faced with decisions and doubts in Congress about the course of U.S. policy in Vietnam, and with criticism from some of those attending the White House Festival of the Arts, the President again called on his old friend, J. William Fulbright, who was widely respected by those attending the festival, to explain and defend the administration's position. This is one description of their meeting at the White House that morning:[74]

> This was much like every other talk he has had with Johnson on Vietnam, Fulbright sitting quiet and restless while the President lectured him at a machine-gun clip, words tumbling over each other in that peculiarly flat drawl. . . .
>
> He went flaying away with words at the Senator. All right, Bill, you think we should negotiate. Let me show you how many times we have offered to talk to them. (Scraps of memoranda pulled from the pockets.) They have spit in our eyes. How do you negotiate with folks like that? (An eager, compelling stare with those bright eyes.) And the military pressing

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[71] A copy of Dodd's letter is in the National Archives, RG 46, Marcy Chron File.

[72] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, unpublished executive session transcript, June 21, 1965.

[73] No further action was taken on the proposal.

[74] Coffin, *Senator Fulbright, Portrait of a Public Philosopher*, pp. 252-253.

> every day to take stronger action. The generals and CIA are telling us the Communists will start a full-scale offensive when the heavy monsoon rains sweep in, and the South Vietnamese defense may crack and fall apart. . . .
>
> When he had a chance to speak, the Senator said he was going to oppose, publicly, a further escalation of the war. Johnson said he hoped his friend would point out how patient he had been, how in his April 7 speech he offered unconditional discussions with North Vietnam, and Hanoi and Peking denounced him for his pains. Good God, he didn't want to send American boys out there to die, but our freedom and liberty were in danger. (Again, the sudden brightness in the eyes.)

Fulbright agreed to give the speech, which he made in the Senate the next day, June 15.[75] In it, he praised Johnson for resisting pressures to expand the war "with steadfastness and statesmanship." The President, he said, "remains committed to the goal of ending the war at the earliest possible time by negotiations without preconditions. In so doing, he is providing the leadership appropriate to a great nation."

Fulbright continued:

> It is clear to all reasonable Americans that a complete military victory in Vietnam, though theoretically attainable, can in fact be attained only at a cost far exceeding the requirements of our interest and our honor. It is equally clear that the unconditional withdrawal of American support from South Vietnam would have disastrous consequences, including but by no means confined to the victory of the Vietcong in South Vietnam. Our policy therefore has been—and should remain—one of determination to end the war at the earliest possible time by a negotiated settlement involving major concessions by both sides.
>
> I am opposed to an unconditional American withdrawal from South Vietnam because such action would betray our obligation to people we have promised to defend, because it would weaken or destroy the credibility of American guarantees to other countries, and because such a withdrawal would encourage the view in Peiping and elsewhere that guerrilla wars supported from outside are a relatively safe and inexpensive way of expanding Communist power.
>
> I am no less opposed to further escalation of the war, because the bombing thus far of North Vietnam has failed to weaken the military capacity of the Vietcong in any visible way; because escalation would invite the intervention—or infiltration—on a large scale of great numbers of North Vietnamese troops; because this in turn would probably draw the United States into a bloody and protracted jungle war in which the strategic advantages would be with the other side; and, finally, because the only available alternative to such a land war would then be the further expansion of the air war to such an extent as to invite either massive Chinese military inter-

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[75] *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 13656-13658.

> vention in many vulnerable areas in southeast Asia or general nuclear war.

In the months ahead, Fulbright said, the U.S. should do two things:

> First we must sustain the South Vietnamese Army so as to persuade the Communists that Saigon cannot be crushed and that the United States will not be driven from South Vietnam by force; second, we must continue to offer the Communists a reasonable and attractive alternative to military victory. For the time being it seems likely that the focus of our efforts will have to be on persuading the Communists that they cannot win a complete military victory; only when this has become clear is it likely they will respond to our proposals for unconditional negotiations.[76]

Several liberals, including Church, McGovern, Nelson, Clark, Frank E. Moss (D/Utah), Young of Ohio, Aiken, and Javits, agreed with Fulbright's position.[77]

On the same day as Fulbright's speech (June 15), Senator A. Willis Robertson, a conservative Democrat from Virginia, made a brief speech which reflected the widespread concern in Congress about deeper U.S. involvement in the war. Robertson, noting the increasing seriousness of the situation in Vietnam as well as the growing commitment of the U.S., said, ". . . I feel we have nothing to lose by taking the issue of North Vietnam's aggression to the U.N., since our efforts to start a peace negotiation have not succeeded." [78]

Senate Republican Leader Dirksen and House Republican Leader Ford criticized Fulbright's speech, asserting that it had been "timed so as to make it appear that it had Presidential approval." Dirksen, referring to Fulbright's comment about "major concessions," said that, ". . . any who talk of concessions by the United States have an obligation to specify the kinds of concessions which they are prepared to advocate." [79]

Although Dirksen supported the President, other Republican leaders questioned the use of U.S. ground forces in the war, preferring increasing bombing. They also expressed concern about a possible negotiated settlement that would weaken South Vietnam. On June 14, Representative Laird, chairman of the House Republican Conference, issued a statement declaring:

> We may be dangerously close to ending Republican support of our present Vietnam policy. This possibility exists because the American people do not know how far the administration is prepared to go with large-scale use of ground forces in order to save face in Vietnam.
>
> The American people deserve an answer to this question. The Republican Party should base its future support on the nature of that answer.
>
> In the absence of this answer, we can only conclude that present policy is aimed not at victory over the Communist in-

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[76] For generally favorable comments on Fulbright's speech by Philip A. Hart (D/Mich.), Morse, and Dodd, see *ibid.*, pp. 13865-13866, 13943-13946, 14014-14016.

[77] *Ibid.*, vol. 111, pp. 14628-14635.

[78] *Ibid.*, p. 13577.

[79] *New York Times*, June 19, 1965.

> surgency nor at driving Communists out of South Vietnam but rather at some sort of negotiated settlement which would include Communist elements in a coalition government.
>
> If such is the objective of the Johnson administration, then the charge can be leveled that this administration is overcommitting ground forces in this area of the world and needlessly exposing the lives of thousands of American boys.

Laird said that bombing of additional targets in North Vietnam, including Haiphong, would be one way of increasing pressure for negotiations while at the same time protecting U.S. forces.[80]

When Senator Dirksen was asked about Laird's statement, however, he replied, "We are going to uphold the President's hand. What else can you do in a situation like this?"[81]

A few days later, in speeches to the Young Republican National Convention, both former Senator Goldwater and Senator Hickenlooper reiterated Laird's position.[82] Goldwater said that SEATO forces from Asian countries which were more familiar with the climate and terrain should be used in ground combat operations, and the U.S. role should be primarily one of sea and air support. "Our sea and air power," he said, "should strike at all the means by which the enemy either supports or commits aggression." He and Hickenlooper both questioned the administration's emphasis on negotiations. A neutralized South Vietnam with a coalition government, Goldwater said, "would be Communist virtually overnight."

Senator Javits also spoke at the convention, saying that Republican criticism of the Johnson administration's policy could help to avoid U.S. involvement in a land war in Asia.

On July 1, after a Senate-House Republican leadership meeting, House Republican Leader Ford repeated some of these same points. "The United States," he said, "cannot, without violating its word, agree to settlement which involves a coalition government with Communists. . . . The administration must not sacrifice the freedom and independence of South Vietnam."[83] He also questioned the use of ground forces: "In this crisis, some Republican leaders believe American air and sea power must be used more effectively in North Vietnam against significant military targets. . . . We question the logic of committing U.S. ground forces on a large scale to fight a war in Southeast Asia."[84]

Democrats, particularly Senate Democratic Leader Mansfield, took Ford and Laird to task for their criticism of the President and for advocating increased bombing of the North. Mansfield also accused them of proposing an action which, by "raising the level of the conflict another notch," would increase U.S. involvement and casualties.[85] He said he hoped that those Republicans who took this position—and he specifically exempted Senate Republican Leader Dirksen—"will not seek to divide this Nation at this critical time. I hope their support will be as warm for the President in November as it was in May." Republican Senator Aiken, who tended to be rather independent of his party's leadership, agreed with Mansfield, and said he hoped the Republican Party would not acquire the title of "War Party."[86]

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[80] For Laird's statement, which was inserted in the *Congressional Record* several days later, see *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 14154-14155.

[81] *New York Times*, June 15, 1965. In a column on June 16, James Reston commented on Laird and Fulbright's statements, and concluded: "Either way it is a political headache for the President. If he doesn't get a negotiated settlement he will be stuck with an unpopular war, and if he does he will be accused of appeasement. No wonder there is a look of settled melancholy on his face."

[82] *Ibid.*, June 17 and 18, 1965.

[83] *CR*, vol. 111, p. 15517.

[84] This theme continued to be emphasized by Ford (see the *New York Times* for July 19 and 23, 1965), despite Dirksen's continued support of the President (*New York Times*, July 23). Former Vice President Nixon also took the same position as Ford. See the *Washington Post*, July 11, 1965.

There was also pressure from Republicans as well as some Democrats on the House and Senate Appropriations and Armed Services Committees as the Defense Department's appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 1966 (ending June 30, 1966) began moving through Congress in June 1965. They argued that in seeking to hold down the size of the government budget (in January 1965, with considerable political fanfare, the President had submitted a budget of just under $100 billion) the administration had not requested a sufficient amount for the costs of the war during the next fiscal year, and that this shortfall would have to be made up by supplemental requests.[87] Democratic leaders in Congress, such as Representative Mahon, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, defended the administration, but agreed that there would have to be additional requests for money if the war escalated. They insisted, based on a statement of justification by McNamara, that for the foreseeable future there was no need for any additional funding.[88]

As the Republicans had predicted, however, in early August 1965, after his decision in late July to approve Westmoreland's request, the President asked Congress to approve an additional $1.7 billion "Southeast Asia Emergency Fund" for FY 1966 to help pay for the war. This was subsequently approved as part of the regular Defense Department appropriations bill for FY 1966, which was passed by the Senate in August 1965 and became law in September.

In sending the $1.7 billion request to Congress, the President pointed out that it did not include the other costs of escalating the war—notably, adding 340,000 personnel to the armed forces—and that more supplemental FY 1966 funds would be requested for Vietnam in early 1966. (In January 1966, another $12.7 billion was requested, bringing the total added for FY 1966 to almost $15 billion.)

Ultimately, some of the pressure from Congress to scale down the war came from the effects of the war on the budget and the economy. Here, too, the President hoped he could control events long enough for his Great Society legislation to be enacted. He was well aware, as he subsequently told Doris Kearns, that, "Once the war began, then all those conservatives in the Congress would use it as a weapon against the Great Society."[89] What he may not have reckoned on, or may have failed to anticipate, was that the war would cost as much as it did, or that efforts to minimize or conceal those costs, beginning with the FY 1966 authorization and appropriations bills, would so seriously affect his credibility with Congress and the public.

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[85] *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 15855-15856.

[86] *Ibid.*, pp. 15319-15320. For Laird's reply to Mansfield see pp. 18743-18744.

[87] At the time, June 1965, the costs of the Vietnam war were being absorbed by the Defense Department in its regular budget. In addition, about $600 million in foreign aid funds for FY 1965, which included economic and military assistance, was being spent in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

[88] See the debate on June 23, 1965 on the Department of Defense appropriations bill for FY 1966, *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 14468 ff.

[89] Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, p. 251.

Proposed Use of the United Nations

In some quarters in the executive branch and Congress there continued to be support for a new U.N. peace initiative to accompany or as an alternative to further U.S. military escalation as proposed by Westmoreland. In the executive branch, Ambassador Adlai Stevenson and Harlan Cleveland, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, recommended such a move. Stevenson, as was mentioned earlier, told the President in an NSC meeting on June 11, 1965 that the U.S. should ask Secretary General U Thant to call for a cease-fire and negotiations. This would probably be rejected by the North Vietnamese, he said, but the U.S. would then be in a stronger position to take further military actions. The President brushed aside the proposal, saying that Stevenson should discuss it with Rusk.

On June 16, Harlan Cleveland sent a memorandum to Rusk in response to a request from McGeorge Bundy, (which may have been in response to the President's comment to Stevenson), in which he reexamined the question of taking the Vietnam question to the U.N. Security Council. His conclusion was that, "the case for moving along this line is very strong. . . ." William Bundy, for one, disagreed. In a brief memorandum to Rusk on June 18 (with which he said U. Alexis Johnson agreed), he argued that a U.N. initiative at that time would not be wise: "I wouldn't attempt to judge just how the debate would go if there were one in the Security Council, but I should think we would still have the major problem that the Soviets would be the attorneys for the Communist camp and thus would have to take the strongest possible position, opposing us, on the record. But, above all, I think that such a US initiative at this time would simply not be understood at all in Saigon and would have a very disheartening effect."[90]

On June 18, after a meeting of the President and his Cabinet at which Rusk reviewed U.S. efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Vietnam problem, Rusk held a press conference at which he made a lengthy statement on the subject, concluding that, ". . . we do not see at the present time active interest on the part of Hanoi and Peiping, active effort on the part of Moscow, to bring this matter to a peaceful conclusion."[91]

Discussion of whether to take the Vietnam issue to the U.N. continued as preparations were made for a scheduled speech by President Johnson to the U.N. General Assembly. On June 24, the day before the speech, McGeorge Bundy sent the President a memorandum saying that he had talked to Rusk, Ball and William Bundy about a U.S. initiative in the U.N. Security Council, and that, "The Secretary is the least negative and Bill the most so."[92] He added that there were three opposing basic arguments: that it would be "unsettling in Saigon"; "that it would require Moscow to take a harsh public line against us at a time when we still have some hope to engage them more usefully in negotiation"; that there was "a danger that Hanoi would read this appeal as weakness." "Given these difficulties," McGeorge Bundy said, "I am inclined now to back away from this one. I think it would be wise to take the position that *if* there should ever be a prospect of effective action in the UN, we would be the first to work for it."

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[90] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers). Cleveland's memorandum is in Lot File 74 D 272.

[91] *Department of State Bulletin,* July 5, 1967.

[92] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

After his speech, the President was scheduled to meet with U Thant, and on June 24, in another memorandum to the President, accompanying Rusk's recommendations (drafted by William Bundy) for that meeting,[93] McGeorge Bundy said: ". . . I think the simple thing to do with U Thant is to keep the heat on him to keep the heat on Hanoi. (Peking is probably hopeless). The only way we will get out of this struggle is to have the North Vietnamese recognize their interest in negotiations. If U Thant knows how tough you are, he can give real help in the same way Nehru helped Eisenhower get an armistice in Korea."[94]

On June 25, President Johnson spoke to the U.N. General Assembly, which was meeting in San Francisco on the 20th anniversary of the signing in that city of the U.N. Charter. While hundreds of pickets demonstrated outside to protest U.S. involvement in Vietnam,[95] the President urged the U.N. to bring the North Vietnamese to the negotiating table. Afterwards, he met with U Thant and reportedly told him that the U.S. could not meet with the North Vietnamese because to do so would adversely affect U.S. relations with South Vietnam and lead to the collapse of the South Vietnamese Government.[96]

On July 7, 1965, a week before he died, Stevenson, after conferring with Rusk on July 6 (see below), talked again with U Thant, who said that if a cease-fire were proposed the question of the representation of the South Vietnamese Communists (NLF) would immediately arise. Stevenson replied that "in present circumstances" this could not be considered.[97] He reported to Rusk, whose response, according to Stevenson's notes, was, in part: "Any participation by VC would collapse whole position in VN—Can do much better than that on the ground." [98]

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[93] For Rusk's recommmendations to the President, drafted by William Bundy, for the meeting with U Thant, see Johnson Library, WHCF, C.F. ND 19/CO 312, "Discussion of Viet-Nam at Your Meeting with U Thant," June 24, 1965.

[94] Same location.

[95] *New York Times*, June 26, 1965. For the text of the President's speech to the U.N. see *Public Papers of the Presidents*, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, pp. 703-706.

[96] Walter Johnson, "The U Thant-Stevenson Peace Initiatives in Vietnam, 1964-1965," cited above, p. 294. Stevenson, who was not invited to attend the meeting with U Thant, was left with the impression that the U.S. was not seriously seeking to use the U.N. See Martin, *Adlai Stevenson and the World*, pp. 854-855.

[97] Johnson Library, NSF Agency File, Representative of the U.S. to the U.N., UN Mission Geneva to Washington 27, July 7, 1965. Stevenson also was being strongly challenged by some of his long-time supporters among the liberal writer-intellectual political activists. Seven of these confronted him at a private meeting on June 21 which is described by Richard J. Walton, *The Remnants of Power* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1968), pp. 172 ff.

[98] Walter Johnson, "The U Thant-Stevenson Peace Initiatives in Vietnam, 1964-1965," p. 295. In November 1965, Eric Severeid, journalist and television commentator and a friend of Stevenson, reported that just before his death Stevenson had told him of U Thant's 1964-1965 proposals, and that Stevenson "was convinced that these opportunities should have been seized, whatever their result." Eric Severeid, "The Final Troubled Hours of Adlai Stevenson," *Look* magazine, Nov. 30, 1965.

In Congress, there was also some interest in using the U.N. to seek a diplomatic solution to the Vietnam problem. On June 24, 1965, Senator Frank Church suggested, as he had earlier in the year, that the U.S. should take the Vietnam problem to the U.N. He also recommended that, as the basis for an agreement with the Communists, the U.S. should accept NLF representation in negotiations, and should espouse the principle of self-determination through elections in which the people would choose among candidates, including Communists.

On June 25, Church, who was then chairman of the International Organizations Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, together with Senator Carlson, the ranking Republican on the subcommittee, accompanied President Johnson to San Francisco for the President's speech to the U.N. General Assembly. This is Church's description of what happened during the trip:[99]

> . . . we no sooner got on the plane than he [President Johnson] began to discuss, in a very emotional way, the bombing raid of the night before and how he'd been up all night waiting to get word back as to how many planes had returned. I was taken aback by the way he was, evidently, running the war from the White House in a most detailed way—passing on how many planes would be engaged, and the given mission, and what the targets were to be, and how many of his boys had returned. He had personalized the war by this time and that disturbed me greatly, because I thought it meant that he was losing his capacity to render an objective judgment by losing his detachment. . . .
>
> And while he was speaking this way, I was keeping silent. One of the young officers came in with a message. He had it on some kind of a tray, and I remember thinking of how a Roman centurion might come in and present, on a marble tablet to the Caesar, word from the front.
>
> And Johnson took it, opened it and read it, and turned just crimson. And then he took the telegram and he threw it over to me and he said, "Read that." So I read it, and it was very sad news of a plastic bomb explosion that had taken place in Saigon, in which a number of our young soldiers had been killed, as well as two American women. . . . He watched me as I read it. I put it down. And he said, "I suppose you'd turn the other cheek." And I thought to myself, I haven't said or done anything to provoke this kind of abuse from the President. He's invited me as his guest, and I'm just not going to take that from him. So, I said, "Well, Mr. President, this news saddens me as I know it must sadden you." "But," I said, "you know, we're the ones that sent them out there. And we did so knowing the danger, the risk. Plastic bombs are terrible things but that's all the Vietnamese have to fight back with. They don't have big bombers to drop napalm on villages from 35,000 feet." "So," I said, "if I were one of them, fighting on their side, I'd be fighting that way too, making plastic bombs." And he whirled around in his chair and turned his back on me and

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[99] CRS Interview with Frank Church, July 5, 1983.

> talked to the other two for a few minutes and then he said, "I'm tired, I'm going to bed." The next day he never said a word to me except for one comment on the plane. He was talking to Frank Carlson about a cattle ranch he [Johnson] was going to buy in Kansas. We were flying from having seen Harry Truman in Missouri that morning to San Francisco, and he looked up and he saw me sitting there. And he said, "Come over here, Frank. Sit down beside me." He said, "I want this photographer [White House photographer on the plane] to get some pictures of me with a peacemaker."
>
> That's all he said to me that day. And then I came back to Washington on Air Force One and he went off to Texas, or someplace, after the meeting. . . .

George Reedy, Johnson's press secretary, had a long talk with Church and Carlson on the day of the U.N. speech. In a memorandum to the President summarizing their attitudes, Reedy said that both Senators expressed their pleasure with the U.N. speech and their general approval of the President's position on Vietnam. Church, he said, stressed his concern about the increased bombing of North Vietnam, which he thought "will inevitably bring China into the war." "The solution to the Vietnam problem," Church said, according to Reedy, "lies in South Vietnam and the focus of activity should be to suppress the rebellion." "The only activity that he [Church] can recommend to solve the situation," Reedy added, "is to continue putting in more ground troops in South Vietnam as you are doing. He hopes that if there is enough of this, eventually the North Vietnamese will give up and permit the issues to be brought to the conference table."[100]

Senator Morse also continued to urge use of the U.N., and on June 17, when he was at the White House for the signing of a bill, the President drew him aside and asked him to prepare "on blank sheets of paper" his suggestions for involving the U.N. in the settlement of the Vietnam war—"and get it delivered to me tomorrow." [101] Morse asked Carl Marcy, chief of staff of the Foreign Relations Committee, to draft a memorandum. After additional drafting, the memorandum was sent by Morse to the President.[102] It began by describing the need for involving the U.N.:

> The United States will make a profound error if we do no more than prosecute the war. The longer it continues, the more likely it will escalate, and we cannot escalate it ourselves without China and Russia escalating their participation, too.
>
> It would be a very serious mistake to think the American people would support a stalemated ground war in Vietnam for

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[100] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces. An accompanying note indicates that the President had the text of Reedy's memo sent to Washington from San Francisco, with copies to Rusk, McNamara and McGeorge Bundy.

Garry V. Wenske, who was a close associate of Church, disputes Reedy's report on Church's position: "At no time during the war in Southeast Asia did Frank Church ever advocate, publicly or privately, additional troops in South Vietnam. He did not believe that a military solution was possible, and therefore, he would not have suggested that the 'rebellion' could have been suppressed. . . ." Letter to CRS from Garry Wenske, Mar. 27, 1987.

[101] When Morse returned to the Capitol, he dictated a memorandum of his conversation with the President, a copy of which is in the National Archives, RG 46, Marcy Chron File.

[102] A copy of Marcy's draft and cover memorandum to Morse, June 17, are in the same location. The memorandum which was sent to the President is in the Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

> a period long enough to force the Communists into negotiating. They refused to support that kind of war in Korea. It became a choice between going all out to win, or ending it on almost any terms.
>
> We alone cannot stop the war in Vietnam. But the United Nations could. The United States has more to gain from a U.N.-imposed peace than from a continuation of the fighting, leading we know not where.
>
> It is frequently alleged that the United States has three possible courses of action in Vietnam: to escalate, to get out, or to stalemate the issue until the other side gets tired.
>
> But there is another course of action which is positive in a world framework, even if the short range effects in Vietnam may be difficult, embarrassing, and involve loss of face. This course is for the United States to call on the United Nations to make the Vietnamese war its business. More is involved than suggesting that the Secretary General visit Hanoi and Peking. What is required is a specific application of U.N. procedures.

The memorandum then explained in some detail the procedures by which the U.S. could take the issue to the U.N., following which it summarized the steps which Morse recommended should be taken: The U.S. would ask the Security Council to end the war, and, if that failed, the U.S. would call for a special meeting of the General Assembly to recommend action to end the fighting. Furthermore, the U.S. would agree in advance to abide by the recommendations or decisions of whichever of the two U.N. bodies took action. At the time it asked the U.N. to act, the United States would also suspend for one month all air and naval attacks on North Vietnam.

In a memorandum to the President on June 21 enclosing a suggested response to Morse, McGeorge Bundy said, "I think Morse's memorandum is tightly argued and complex, and if we answer it point by point at this stage we will be almost sure to trip over ourselves as we make tactical decisions in the coming months. So it seems to be better to give him the soft answer which is suggested in the attached draft."

Johnson agreed, and signed the Bundy draft letter thanking Morse for his "thoughtful" memorandum, and saying that it would be carefully studied. "You can be sure that if, at any time, we think there is a real prospect of progress through the United Nations, we will be the first to move."[103] In a note to his secretary, the President said that the letter should be sent to Morse, but he added that he wanted the memorandum put on his desk: "I've got to read that memorandum tomorrow."

Apparently at the President's request, McGeorge Bundy prepared a memorandum for the President on June 24 on Morse's position in which he said that Morse's memorandum made "the tightest case I have seen for taking Vietnam to the UN."[104] He added that Morse had not said what kind of a U.N. resolution he would recommend, and, Bundy said, "It is on this point that I think he should be pressed." He continued:

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[103] Bundy's memorandum and the letter from the President to Morse are in the Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[104] Johnson Library, C.F. ND 19/CO 312.

> . . . Does he [Morse] want the UN to vote ways and means of getting the North Vietnamese out of South Vietnam? Or does he want the General Assembly to validate a Communist takeover? Or does he simply want it to "observe," as it is doing in the Dominican Republic? The last is about all we could really hope to get, and while it might be worth it, it would certainly not bring peace, in and of itself.
>
> As you know, I myself think that we can and should take further initiatives to see what the UN can do about Vietnam. I think this is primarily a tactical matter, designed to show that the Soviet Union is not prepared to desert other "socialist" countries on this issue. The trouble with this tactical approach, of course, is that a man who holds Morse's basic view is likely to denounce it as a fraud unless we take it all the way through and actively work for a resolution which would get us out of there. And if we are going to get out of Vietnam, I do not think it serves any good purpose to blacken the reputation of the UN by trying unsuccessfully to unload this responsibility on it. No one would be fooled, and both the UN and the US would be damaged.
>
> So I think the underlying difference between us and Morse is not whether we should take the case to the UN, but what we take it there *for*. I would take it there to pin the rose of aggression on the Communists. I think Senator Morse would take it there in order to cover a withdrawal and a Communist takeover. But I am not sure, and this is what a talk with him may uncover. (emphasis in original)

At some point in the next two days the President talked again to Morse and asked him to propose further steps to secure U.N. action. At Morse's request, Marcy drafted for him another memorandum on June 26 which argued that the first step was "to get the parties talking directly to each other instead of communicating back and forth through the press," and recommended that a resolution be introduced in the Security Council by another country requesting the Secretary General to convene an international conference of those countries which had attended the Geneva Conference in 1954, together with others which might be added, to discuss a cease-fire. If the resolution were vetoed by the Russians, that would put the onus for hostilities on the "other side." [105]

On June 29, Morse sent a memorandum to the President proposing that the U.S. ask the Secretary General of the U.N. for a meeting of the Security Council to consider the war in Vietnam and the threat it posed to international peace and security.[106] In his memorandum he said, "I believe the most important thing the United States should do is to lay before the Security Council the whole issue of the Vietnam war. . . ." He also proposed two drafts of a resolution which the U.S. could offer, one of which, as Marcy had suggested, would call on the Secretary General to reconvene the Geneva Conference of 1954 for the purpose of seeking a cease-fire and a negotiated settlement. The other would call for a cease-fire and for a U.N. peace force to replace U.S. troops while a political settlement was being negotiated.

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[105] National Archives, RG 46, Marcy Chron File.

[106] Johnson Library, C.F. ND 19/CO 312.

The President sent Morse's June 29 memorandum to Rusk for comment by the State Department,[107] and in its response the Department apparently suggested that rather than taking the issue to the Security Council, the U.S. should propose that a U.N. Commission be sent to Vietnam to study the problem and report back in September.[108]

On July 1, Morse gave a long speech in the Senate in which he expanded on his memoranda to the President. He said that in his speech to the U.N. the President had "honored the charter of organization more in the breach than in observance," and he added:[109]

> In my judgment, the only hope for saving mankind from a third world war is to have our allies move, and move quickly, to carry out their obligations under the United Nations Charter and to take jurisdiction over the war in Asia. That will mean issuing rules of law to be complied with, not only by the Asians, but by the United States.
>
> The United States must be brought to the bar of international justice, along with the Communists, and the United States and the Communists must have the law laid down to them, and the other nations of the world must make it perfectly clear to the United States and to the Communists that this war must stop; that this unjustifiable killing, that will extend in the months ahead to thousands and thousands, unless it is stopped, must be brought to an end by the other nations of the world proceeding to live up to the obligations placed upon them as a result of their signing the United Nations Charter.

Morse said it was a mistake to think that the Communists would yield either to a strategy of gradual escalation or one of attrition and stalemate, or that the American public would support a protracted war in Asia:

> It is coming to be a rather popular theory in some quarters that a stalemated ground war in Asia will be necessary to bring the Vietcong and the Vietnamese to the bargaining table, now that the policy of bombing North Vietnam into negotiations has proved a failure. That is why we have the policy of bombing North Vietnam. It is thought that by bombing North Vietnam, the North Vietnamese will be brought into negotiations. But that has already proved to be a failure. The evidence is already clear that it will never be possible to bomb North Vietnam into the kind of surrender that will bring her to the bilateral negotiating table with the United States. We are hearing that instead of trying to grind the north into seeing the wisdom of bargaining, we should put the hundred thousand or more Americans into the south that would be needed to fight the Vietcong to a draw and convince them

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[107] Same location, McGeorge Bundy Memorandum to Rusk, June 30, 1965.

[108] The document containing the State Department's comments has not been located. In his column in the *Washington Post,* July 1, 1965, Drew Pearson, with whom Morse had close contact, reported that the State Department had proposed such a commission, and quoted several of the comments from McGeorge Bundy's memorandum of June 24.

[109] *CR,* vol. 111, p. 15467.

> after enough fighting and enough losses that they cannot win and therefore should negotiate.
>
> But I think the theorists who are greatly taken with the intellectual concept that the new white man's burden calls for drawn-out, low-level, and inconclusive fighting over great areas and great periods of time totally ignore the factor of what the American people will support. The ideology of this concept is widely favored among military and diplomatic people who envision the United States taking the place of the British Empire in policing the world for our own ends as we see them. They keep telling us that the Communists excel in protracted operations that seek to wear down an opponent until he gives up out of sheer exasperation and disgust. We are told that we must meet this challenge by outlasting the Vietcong in low-level, indecisive fighting, and that to do this, we must overcome our natural American proclivity for fast results and neat conclusions.
>
> I disagree with this theory because I do not believe there is anything inherently wrong with the American proclivity for fast results and neat conclusions. Surely we know from history that disputes that fester and drag on for years not only leave bitter divisions among people but they also furnish a continuing spark that can ignite widespread war.

Repeating his plea for U.N. intervention, Morse said:

> The problem is bringing some procedures to bear upon an act of aggression, or a civil war, or any disturbance, that will bring it under control before every leading nation feels obliged to act unilaterally on behalf of its own interest. Wars do not start with some single, spectacular, and unexpected action although many people labor under that false impression.
>
> They develop over issues and incidents that go unsettled until they escalate into general conflict, or cause some dramatic incident that is then cited as the cause of the war. However, the causes of major war are usually of long standing. The cause should be eradicated before some dramatic incident throws powers into mortal combat.
>
> To cope with these disturbances before they lead to general war is what the United Nations is for. . . .
>
> If we have learned anything yet from the war in Vietnam, it is that the United States, acting alone, cannot end the war. At worst, we can help it develop into a nuclear holocaust; at best, we can assure that it drags on indefinitely, while the people of South Vietnam and North Vietnam [have] to pay the price of being caught between the world's leading ideologies.

On July 6, Rusk sent a memorandum to the President in which he discussed Morse's proposals.[110] Morse, he said, had raised two basic questions: "(1) Whether it makes sense to use the UN to help bring about a conference on Vietnam; and (2) whether an effort should be made to get a UN peace force into Vietnam." With respect to the second question, he added, ". . . there has not been, and there is not now, a remote possibility to get a UN peacekeeping force into Vietnam *except* as a part of a settlement with the Communists." (emphasis in original)

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[110] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

With respect to the first question, Rusk said that he had discussed it with Morse as well as with the Russian Ambassador to the U.S., Anatole Dobrynin. He said he had told Morse that the Russians were trying to encourage "some sort of negotiations or discussion of Vietnam." Morse replied that at a recent dinner meeting with Drew Pearson (which Morse apparently attended), Dobrynin had been asked what the attitude of the U.S.S.R. would be toward a Security Council call for a Geneva conference on Southeast Asia, and he had replied that it would depend upon prior talks between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. as well as upon the "manner of presentation to the Security Council." Morse, Rusk added, "seemed to think this left some opening."

Rusk continued:

> As you know from my memorandum of conversation with Dobrynin, I explored this with Dobrynin last Saturday [July 3]. He flatly denied having made any such statement and reiterated that the Soviet Union did not think that the Security Council was the proper forum to take up any such proposal. We must anticipate, therefore, that the Soviet Union would not only oppose such a Security Council resolution but would be cast in the position of a harsh advocate of the Hanoi position. There is obvious disadvantage in our forcing the Soviet Union into an even more extreme position than they have taken, since we know there is still some flexibility in the Soviet view of negotiation.

Rusk also reported that he had talked that day (July 6) with Ambassador Stevenson, who agreed that the U.S. should avoid a "vindictive debate" in the Security Council. He said that he and Stevenson had agreed, however, that the U.S. should take the following steps:

> (a) Stevenson will consult with U Thant about the desirability of a Security Council resolution calling for a conference of the Geneva powers; U Thant could then sound out the Soviet Delegation and ascertain directly whether there is any possibility of a Soviet abstention rather than a veto.
>
> (b) We might well now present in writing to the members of the Security Council a periodic report on events since February (the date of our last report). In this way we could recapitulate the various efforts which have been made to seek a peaceful settlement, their rejection by the other side, and a summary of the situation as we see it. There could be some value in a document of this sort which would be circulated to all the members of the UN.
>
> (c) We would say to U Thant that if he wished himself, as Secretary General, to call for a meeting of the Geneva powers, at which meeting the question of a cessation of hostilities would be the first order of business, we would indicate our readiness for such a conference. This would be entirely consistent with our basic view that we are prepared for discussions without conditions.
>
> (d) We would also say to U Thant that we could see some advantage in his undertaking any *private* exploration which he

could make with Hanoi, Peiping or Moscow to ascertain whether there are any openings for a peaceful settlement. Such explorations might at least indicate that he had been a possible channel if any of the parties had anything of interest to say. (emphasis in original)

Finally, Rusk asked the President for approval to proceed on these points, as well as to tell Morse "the gist" of this course of action. Apparently the President gave his approval. The next day (July 7), as was mentioned earlier, Stevenson met with U Thant. Presumably, Rusk also talked to Morse.

More Troops Are Approved and Presidential Advisers Formulate Their Views

On June 16, 1965, McNamara announced that 21,000 additional U.S. troops were leaving for Vietnam, bringing U.S. forces to about 72,000 (15 maneuver battalions).[111] On June 17, B-52 bombers, the largest in the American arsenal, were used in South Vietnam for the first time. Based in Guam, they made the 4,300 round-trip flight to strike an area near Saigon, and U.S. helicopters were then used to airlift South Vietnamese forces to the scene in an effort to trap Communist forces. Evidently the Communists had advance warning, however, and, as so often happened during the war, only "light contact" was reported.[112]

On June 18, McGeorge Bundy sent McNamara a memorandum informing him of the President's concern ". . . that we find more dramatic and effective actions in SVN. . . ."[113]

Later that day (June 18), the President met with Rusk, McNamara and McGeorge Bundy from 4:20 p.m. to 5:10 p.m., and agreed, as Westmoreland had requested on June 7, to send the new airmobile division—the 1st Air Cavalry Division (9 battalions, a total of 28,000 troops including support forces)—to Vietnam. It was also agreed that a brigade (3 battalions) from the Army's 1st Infantry Division and another brigade from its 101st Airborne Division, due to be deployed in July, might be withdrawn, depending on the situation, after deployment of the 1st Air Cavalry Division. (If the two brigades were to remain, there would then be 23 U.S. maneuver battalions in South Vietnam out of the 34 U.S. battalions requested by Westmoreland, and the total number of American forces in Vietnam would be 115,000, compared to 17 battalions and 95,000 troops if the two brigades were to be withdrawn.)

McNamara said in the meeting, "Communists think they're winning. We have to change their minds."[114]

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[111] *New York Times*, June 17, 1965.

[112] *Ibid.*, June 18.

[113] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[114] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy, handwritten notes of the meeting on June 18, 1965. See also the memorandum, unattributed but probably by McNaughton, to McNamara, "Scenario for Possible Deployment of Air Mobile Division," June 22, 1965, in the Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

On June 19, a draft National Security Action Memorandum was prepared (but never issued), probably by McNaughton's office, stating that on June 18 the President had decided to deploy the 1st Air Cavalry Division and to withdraw the two brigades after the division was deployed. It also stated, however, that the decision to withdraw the brigades would be reexamined prior to the deployment of the division. Johnson Library, NSF Agency Files, Department of Defense.

Continued

In a memorandum to the President that same day, (June 18), "Keeping the Power of Decision in the South Viet-Nam Crisis," which he opened by quoting Ralph Waldo Emerson's verse, "Things are in the saddle, and ride mankind," George Ball stated his opposition to Westmoreland's 44 battalion request.[115] "Your most difficult continuing problem in South Viet-Nam," he told Johnson, "is to prevent 'things' from getting into the saddle—or, in other words, to keep control of policy and prevent the momentum of events from taking command." The best way to do this, Ball said, would be "(a) to limit our commitments in time and magnitude and (b) to establish specific time schedules for the selection of optional courses of action on the basis of pre-established criteria."

Ball proposed that U.S. forces should be increased to 100,000 and should be fully committed to fighting the war for a limited period of time—three months, the remainder of the monsoon season (which ends around the beginning of October)—as an experiment to test whether, unlike the French, U.S. forces could operate successfully against the Communists in the Vietnamese environment.[116] Based on this experiment, the U.S. could then either enter into the war more actively or find a way to disengage. "Perhaps the large-scale introduction of American forces with their concentrated fire power will force Hanoi and the Viet Cong to the decision we are seeking. On the other hand, we may *not* be able to fight the war successfully enough—even with 500,000 Americans in South Viet-Nam—to achieve this purpose."

After the President read Ball's memorandum, Bill Moyers telephoned Ball to report that the President agreed with most of the memorandum, and that he had commented:[117]

> I don't think I should go over one hundred thousand but I think I should go to that number and explain it. I want George to work for the next ninety days—to work up what is going to happen after the monsoon season. I am not worried about

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According to Gen. Jonathan O. Seaman, Commander of the 1st Infantry Division from 1964 to 1966, the one brigade from his division left for Vietnam on June 26, 1965, and four days later the remainder of the division was ordered to prepare to leave in September. Interview with Gen. Seaman, 1971, Senior Officers Oral History Program, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks.

[115] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[116] On June 30, 1965, McGeorge Bundy sent the President a memorandum (drafted by Chester Cooper, based on material supplied by William Jorden at the State Department) "France in Vietnam, 1954, and the U.S. in Vietnam, 1965—A Useful Analogy?" in which he challenged the analogy which Ball, in particular, had been using, that the U.S., like France, was doomed to fail in Vietnam. After describing the situation of the French in 1954, the memorandum concluded: ". . . despite superficial similarities, the situation faced by France in Vietnam in 1954 is not fundamentally analogous to that faced by the U.S. in Vietnam in 1965.

"France in 1954 was a colonial power seeking to reimpose its overseas rule, out of tune with Vietnamese nationalism, deeply divided in terms of French domestic opinion, politically unstable at home, the victim of seven years of warfare—the last four of them marked by military engagements on a scale far greater than anything yet encountered by the U.S. and the GVN.

"The U.S. in 1965 is responding to the call of a people under Communist assault, a people undergoing a non-Communist national revolution; neither our power nor that of our adversaries has been fully engaged as yet. At home we remain politically strong and, in general, politically united. Options, both military and political, remain to us that were no longer available to the French." Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces. Continuing White House interest in the subject prompted the State Department to ask the U.S. Embassy in Saigon on July 10 to send immediately a report contrasting Vietnamese attitudes toward the French in 1945-1954 with current attitudes toward Americans. Washington to Saigon 95, July 10, 1965. The Embassy replied in Saigon to Washington 117, July 12, 1965. Both cables are in the U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S.

[117] Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, p. 396. Ball does not give the date of Moyers' telephone call.

riding off in the wrong direction. I agree that it might build up bit by bit. I told McNamara that I would not make a decision on this and not to assume that I am willing to go overboard on this. I ain't. If there is no alternative, the fellow who has the best program is the way it will probably go.

On June 23, Ball sent the President, at his request, a memorandum on the commitments or legal obligations of the U.S. to Vietnam, and the effect on these of a decision to withdraw.[118] After briefly summarizing the commitments, Ball said that the consequences of a decision to withdraw should be judged by the effects of such a move on the ". . . credibility of our commitments throughout the world. . . . France could withdraw from Indochina or Algeria without wide-ranging consequences since it was not a great power and other nations did not depend on France for their own security. The United States must, however, always act with the consciousness that if it fails to discharge its role of leadership there is no other free world power capable of taking its place."

McGeorge Bundy gave the memorandum to the President with a note in which he said that his own view was, ". . . that if and when we wish to shift our course and cut our losses in Vietnam we should do so because of a finding that the Vietnamese themselves are not meeting their obligations to themselves or to us. This is the course we started on with Diem, and if we got a wholly ineffective or anti-American government we can do the same thing again. With a 'neutralist' government it would be quite possible to move in this direction."[119]

On June 23, 1965, the President met from 5:50 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. with Rusk, McNamara, Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Vance, William Bundy, McNaughton, General Wheeler, Raborn, Helms, Llewellyn Thompson, and Horace Busby, and Cater from the White House. U. Alexis Johnson, Deputy Ambassador to Vietnam, also attended. According to William Bundy, a plan for negotiations, apparently from Mansfield, was discussed, but the "general feeling was that the outlook was that more forces would be needed."[120] U. Alexis Johnson, commented that 15 battalions (72,000) would be a good leveling-off point. The U.S., he said, should accept the fact that it would be a "long war, without shortcuts and with only the grinding proof to the Viet Cong that they could not win." Ball also argued that 15 battalions should be the limit, and that the U.S. should begin to plan for "cutting its losses" and shifting the focus of attention to Thailand. "Rusk and McNamara objected to this last idea. Thailand, they thought, could not be held if SVN had given up. Rather, Rusk said, we would end up with the only secure areas Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, and NATO, and even India falling to the Communist Chinese." McNamara advocated "a lot more force, in the South and possibly selectively in the North as well, and a much more intensive negotiating effort than he felt had yet been made."

At the conclusion of the meeting on June 23, the President asked McNamara and Ball to state their views in writing, and during the week of June 24-July 2 these papers, together with papers by Rusk and William Bundy, were prepared in "great security," according to William Bundy. Only 10 persons received copies, with another 10-15 aware of what was being done.

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[118] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[119] Same location, McGeorge Bundy Memorandum to the President, June 23, 1965.

[120] This and following comments on the meeting are from Bundy MS., ch. 26, pp. 21 ff.

Meanwhile, on June 29 the President approved the immediate deployment of three more Marine combat units (one Special Landing Force of 3,000 and two Battalion Landing Teams of 4,000 each) as a further demonstration of U.S. determination.[121] This decision was made at a luncheon meeting of the President with Rusk, McNamara and McGeorge Bundy from 1:25 p.m. to 2:35 p.m. Before the meeting, William Bundy sent a memorandum to Rusk "strongly urging" that the decision on sending these additional units be postponed until after there had been more of a review of the divergent positions of Ball and McNamara.[122] He pointed out that with the decision to deploy the 1st Air Cavalry Division, if the three battalions of the 1st Infantry Division and the three battalions of the 101st Airborne remained in Vietnam, rather than being withdrawn after the 1st Air Cavalry Division was deployed, the addition of the three Marine units would increase U.S. forces to 125,000 by September 1, 1965. This, Bundy said, ". . . *exceeds* any total that we can now say confidently would not arouse the belief that we were taking over the war, with incalculable effects on South Vietnamese army performance and on the attitudes of the South Vietnamese people." (emphasis in original)

On the other hand, Bundy said, if July and August were believed to be critical months, and the addition of the three Marine units could therefore prove helpful, the execution of the decision to send the 1st Air Cavalry Division should be delayed at least until August 1, thereby holding U.S. forces to about 85,000 during the remainder of the summer.

During the last week in June, as the President had requested at the meeting on June 23, Ball and McNamara, as well as Rusk and William Bundy, prepared statements of their views. Ball, in a paper on June 29, "Cutting our Losses in South Viet-Nam," which he said was "written on the premise that we are losing the war," made this general argument:[123]

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[121] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy, handwritten notes of luncheon meeting on June 29, 1965. In a meeting with Ambassador Taylor on June 28, Premier Ky stressed the need for additional U.S. forces. Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Saigon to Washington 4422, June 28, 1965.

[122] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 74 D 272 "Ground Force Deployments to South Vietnam," June 29, 1965.

[123] Ball's memorandum, distributed in two parts on June 28 and 29, 1965, is in the Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

In a State Department meeting on June 24, Ball invited others to contribute their ideas. Allen Whiting, Director of Intelligence for the Far East in the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, responded on July 24 with a memorandum, "Where Do We Go From Here?" U.S. Department of State, Lot File 74 D 272. "We seem unwittingly," he said, "to have drifted into a situation wherein U.S. force levels in South Vietnam increase by the tens of thousands within weeks with virtually no agreed definable plan of operations and little credible justification." The response of the North Vietnamese to this buildup, he said, would likely be to increase rapidly the strength of Communist forces in the South, including the concealed use of regular North Vietnamese forces.

According to Whiting, "By design or accident" the U.S. had convinced the North Vietnamese and the Chinese that it was not willing to compromise, and would settle only for "a withdrawal of the Viet Cong by Hanoi." If there was to be any hope for a negotiated settlement, he concluded, the U.S. would have to stop sending additional forces and "step well back from the Chinese border in our attacks on North Vietnam."

Continued

> The position taken in this memorandum does not suggest that the United States should abdicate leadership in the cold war. But any prudent military commander carefully selects the terrain on which to stand and fight, and no great captain has ever been blamed for a successful tactical withdrawal.
>
> From our point of view, the terrain in South Viet-Nam could not be worse. Jungles and rice paddies are not designed for modern arms and, from a military point of view, this is clearly what General de Gaulle described to me as a "rotten country." [Ball had conferred with De Gaulle several days earlier.]
>
> Politically, South Viet-Nam is a lost cause. The country is bled white from twenty years of war and the people are sick of it. The Viet Cong—as is shown by the Rand Corporation Motivation and Morale Study[124]—are deeply committed.
>
> Hanoi has a Government and a purpose and a discipline. The "government" in Saigon is a travesty. In a very real sense, South Viet-Nam is a country with an army and no government.
>
> In my view, a deep commitment of United States forces in a land war in South Viet-Nam would be a catastrophic error. If ever there was an occasion for a tactical withdrawal, this is it.

He supported this argument with the following propositions, each of which he discussed more fully in the paper (all emphases are in the original):

> 1. *We cannot achieve our political objectives by expanding the bombing of North Viet-Nam.* On the contrary, extending the geographical scope of our bombing will pose grave dangers of involving both Red China and the Soviet Union while isolating the United States from its friends and allies.
>
> 2. *There is no assurance that we can achieve our objectives by substantially expanding American forces in South Viet-Nam and committing them to direct combat.* On the contrary, we would run grave risks of bogging down an indeterminate number of American troops in a protracted and bloody conflict of uncertain outcome. This risk is so great, in fact, that those who advocate this course must sustain the burden of proof that commitment of American forces to combat will assure our objectives at an acceptable cost.
>
> 3. *Combining expanded air attacks in the North with increased troop commitments in the South will not achieve the desired objective.* The whole is not greater than the sum of its parts.
>
> 4. *Since the pressures discussed in paragraphs 1 and 2 above offer no assurance that we can win the war by substantially*

Others apparently contributed papers to assist Ball in preparing his memorandum, but the only one of these which is available is a paper from William Bundy, June 26, 1965, in which he examined what the consequences would be of a Communist victory in South Vietnam, and what actions the U.S. could take in that event, especially to defend Thailand. Same location. (In his paper, Bundy referred to an earlier paper he had prepared for the Ball project, in which he had estimated that a major U.S. effort would not significantly increase the chances for a "reasonably hopeful settlement, but this earlier paper is not presently available.)

[124] This is a reference to a study of "Viet Cong Motivation and Morale" by the RAND Corporation which was begun in February 1965 and completed in June. Its findings were discussed by McGeorge Bundy in a memorandum to the President on June 28, 1965 which is in the Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President, as well as in a summary by Chester Cooper which Bundy sent to the President on July 10, 1965.

greater US commitments, we should undertake either to extricate ourselves or to reduce our defense perimeters in South Viet-Nam to accord with the capabilities of a limited US deployment.

5. *This is our last clear chance to make this decision.* If we go forward with Phase III combat, [this is a reference to the large-scale, active warfare phase under the plan approved in December 1964] even at the present level of troop deployment, a substantial number of Americans will be killed. This will make it much harder and more costly to extricate ourselves or reduce our commitments. We should, therefore, revise current orders to return to Phase II and we should maintain our present levels of deployment while we seek to get out of the quagmire and cut our losses.

6. *By pursuing a systematic and careful plan for cutting our losses we should be able to create the conditions under which we can get out of a dangerous situation without excessive loss of American prestige and influence.*

Ball then discussed the problem of "reeducating" the American people and America's allies in preparation for a phasing down of U.S. responsibility in Vietnam. ". . . we have to a large extent," he said, "created our own predicament. In our determination to rally support, we have tended to give the South Vietnamese struggle an exaggerated and symbolic significance (mea culpa since I personally participated in this effort)." In order to find a way out of this predicament, and to establish public support for reducing in the U.S. role, Ball proposed the following justification:

> (a) *The phasing out of American power in South Viet-Nam should not be regarded as a major defeat—either military or political—but a tactical redeployment to more favorable terrain in the over-all Cold War struggle;*
>
> (b) *The loss of South Viet-Nam does not mean the loss of all of Southeast Asia to the Communist power.* Admittedly, Thailand is a special problem that will be dealt with later in this memorandum;
>
> (c) *We have more than met our commitments to the South Vietnamese people.* We have poured men and equipment into the area, have run risks and taken casualties, and have been prepared to continue the struggle provided the South Vietnamese leaders met even the most rudimentary standards of political performance;
>
> (d) *The Viet Cong—while supported and guided from the North—is largely an indigenous movement.* Although we have emphasized its Cold War aspects, the conflict in South Viet-Nam is essentially a civil war within that country.
>
> (e) *Our commitment to the South Vietnamese people is of a wholly different order from our major commitments elsewhere—to Berlin, to NATO, to South Korea, etc.* We ourselves have insisted that curtailment of our activities in South Viet-Nam would cast doubt on our fidelity to other commitments. Now we must begin a process of differentiation founded on fact and law.

> We have *never* had a treaty commitment obligating us to the South Vietnamese people or to a South Vietnamese Government. Our only treaty commitment in that area is to our SEATO partners, and they have—without exception—viewed the situation in South Viet-Nam as not calling the treaty into play.
>
> To be sure, we *did* make a promise to the South Vietnamese people. But that promise was conditioned on their own performance and they have not performed.

Finally, Ball suggested a plan to "create the conditions for a systematic US extrication or—less likely—establish a *sound* basis for our continued involvement at present levels of commitment":

> *Step 1*
>
> The President should make the firm decision that he will *not* commit United States land forces to combat in South Viet-Nam.
>
> *Step 2*
>
> We should use every occasion to re-emphasize what has been clear ever since the first Eisenhower letter [October 23, 1954][125] but has not been recently stated—that our assistance is being provided on two explicit conditions:
>
> (a) that there is a government *genuinely representing the people of South Viet-Nam* which continues to ask for our support; and
>
> (b) that such government maintains an adequate standard of performance, both in the conduct of the war and the making of necessary political, economic and social reforms.
>
> *Step 3*
>
> 1. Since Americans are dying in South Viet-Nam, the United States has both the right and duty to demand of Saigon that it fashion a stable Government of National Union. We should, therefore, make the following *demarche* not only on General Ky but on the leaders of all principal groups in Saigon—the Catholics, the Buddhists, the Cao Dai, the military, the Dai Viet:
>
> (a) unless, *within a month's time,* those leaders are able to put together a Government of National Union under civilian leadership, the United States will have to reconsider the extent of its commitment until such a Government is formed;
>
> (b) a Government of National Union must have authentic representation of all key ethnic, religious, and regional groups with a commitment to national elections as soon as hostilities cease;
>
> (c) such a Government must announce and begin to implement a broad program of political, social and economic reforms, including a cancellation of all peasant debts, land reform, seed and fertilizer programs, etc.

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[125] See pt. I of this study, pp. 286-287.

> > (d) the Government must announce the essentials of the Acheson Plan—including a major amnesty effort—in order to attract and protect defectors from the Viet Cong so as to provide a sound intelligence base for our military operations and a transition to a post-hostility reconstruction of South Viet-Nam as a national entity.
>
> The ability of the Saigon Government to accomplish these objectives is not dependent on the course of the war. If there is to be genuine unity, it can come about regardless of whether the ARVN is winning or merely holding its own during the rainy season. In fact, the worse the war, the greater the crisis that should instill a willingness to abandon internecine strife and unite against the common enemy. If no such willingness prevails in Saigon, we cannot take over the war ourselves.
>
> *Step 4*
>
> If the leaders of the various factions in Saigon prove unwilling or unable to put aside petty factional jealousies and comply with the US *demarche* we must be prepared to follow through. We must be prepared to advise the Ky Government—or whatever government may then be in power—that we cannot maintain even the present level of our assistance.

Ball concluded:

> It is more than likely that a notice of this kind from the United States Government would have the effect of either
>
> > (a) inducing the Ky Government to adopt an extreme nationalist position and announce it would go it alone without United States help; or
> >
> > (b) bring about the fall of the Ky Government in favor of a government prepared to try to find a political solution with the Viet Cong.
>
> In either event, we would not expect that American forces would leave quickly. Rather we would expect a protracted discussion between US representatives and representatives of the various Vietnamese factions.
>
> Should Ky or his successor demand the immediate removal of US forces from South Viet-Nam, he would almost certainly be ousted by more moderate elements. Even if those elements were neutralist, they would still tend to regard our presence for a period of time as essential to prolonged bargaining with the Viet Cong and Hanoi. Our willingness to cooperate in this negotiating phase could permit us to remain in South Viet-Nam for a considerable period and thus avoid any public appearance of a precipitate and undignified withdrawal.
>
> We could use this interval profitably to establish the justice and wisdom of our position with our friends and allies. We could also undertake the necessary diplomatic and economic actions in Thailand and Laos designed to offset so far as possible the immediate shock of the developments in South Viet-Nam.

Shortly after the luncheon meeting on June 29, 1965, at which the President approved the immediate deployment of six more

Marine battalions, there was a meeting at 3:00 p.m. of Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Ball, McNaughton, William Bundy, Unger and Thompson, which the President did not attend, at which Ball's memorandum on "Cutting Our Losses" was, according to William Bundy, ". . . riddled as totally devastating—and the worst way to lose if it came to that. After all the political confusion and ineptitude the US had put up with for two years past, it would have seemed absurd to insist on a new perfection just as the going was at its worst; to Asian eyes, it would have been the most cynical exit method possible."[126]

According to brief handwritten notes of the meeting taken by McGeorge Bundy, Ball said that if the U.S. committed its forces to "substantial combat" it would "pass a breaking point."[127] "Geo [Ball] and Bob [McNamara]," the notes add, "have a hot argument over whether Geo's paper has a good way out."

The question of talks to end the war was also discussed, including whether talks would be "anathema to Saigon Government." McNamara said he would like to "get Ky into talks." William Bundy asked, "Who do you talk to and what do you say? If we talk to NLF we give a very weak sign." The McGeorge Bundy notes continue (without indicating whether William Bundy is still speaking): "Better for Saigon to make own deal? Or should we push them?" There was also the comment, "Move to a large-scale conference on all of Southeast Asia."

McGeorge Bundy's notes also contain this remark, which is not attributed to anyone but may have been Ball's: "We ought to get the gettable VC."[128]

That same day (June 29), NSC staff members Cooper and Thomson sent a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy proposing a plan by which the U.S. could probe North Vietnamese intentions without undermining the U.S. political and military positions.[129] They said they recognized that "there are already several cooks preparing the soup," but they were "confident that the chef was tolerant. . . ."

Their plan would involve three separate actions. One step would involve naming three friendly African governments of "good international standing (e.g., Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Guinea)" to convey a private message from the United States to North Vietnamese and National Liberation Front representatives in Algiers and elsewhere stating that the U.S. would accept, "as *one* basis" for further discussions, the Four Points that North Vietnam had said would be necessary for the war to be settled, and, "as *another* basis" for further discussions, the four-point proposal which the South Vietnamese had issued on June 22.[130] (emphases in original) The U.S. would offer to meet with the North Vietnamese "at any place of their choosing for *informal discussions* of *both* sets of proposals as possible bases for more formal negotiations." (emphasis in original) The message would also propose a *de facto* cease-fire during the discussion. If the talks were promising, they should be enlarged to include South Vietnamese representatives as well as representatives of the National Liberation Front. The hope would be that the talks would result in a Geneva-type conference.

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[126] Bundy MS., ch. 27, pp. 5-6.

[127] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy.

[128] *Ibid.*

[129] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[130] For the text of North Vietnam's Four Points, see p. 218 above, and for the text of South Vietnam's Four Points see p. 296 above.

A second part of the Cooper-Thomson proposal was that a high-level U.S. official, preferably Averell Harriman (Ambassador at Large, previously Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East), should go to Moscow, either without publicity or on some pretext, to talk to Russian leaders. He would emphasize U.S. "determination to do whatever is necessary, regardless of the consequences, to keep South Vietnam from going Communist." He would tell the Russians that U.S. "national prestige is inextricably tied to a non-Communist outcome in the South," and voice U.S. concern that the action of the Vietnamese Communists and the Chinese "may permanently damage our relations with the U.S.S.R. and seriously threaten world peace." Further, he would discuss the stakes that the Russians themselves had in the conflict, and express American "willingness to consider face-saving compromises for a peaceful solution as long as the compromises left South Vietnam intact as a non-communist state." He would also express U.S. interest in seeing the U.S.S.R. play a role in ending the war "—and get the credit—if necessary."

The third part of the Cooper-Thomson proposal for a diplomatic initiative, depending on the outcome of the Moscow talks, would be a 7-10 day pause in U.S. bombing of North Vietnam. The Russians, and, through the neutral African countries, the North Vietnamese, would be told about the pause, but there would be no public announcement, thus permitting the U.S. to resume bombing at any time.

On July 1, after the critique of his earlier paper, Ball submitted a new memorandum, "A Compromise Solution in South Viet-Nam,"[131] in which he said that the war was being lost and unless a way could be found to "limit our liabilities in Viet-Nam" the U.S. would be faced with a "protracted war involving an open-ended commitment of US forces, mounting US casualties, no assurance of a satisfactory solution, and a serious danger of escalation at the end of the road." "Once we suffer large casualties we will have started a well-nigh irreversible process. Our involvement will be so great that we cannot—without national humiliation—stop short of achieving our complete objectives. *Of the two possibilities I think humiliation would be more likely than the achievement of our objectives—even after we had paid terrible costs.*" (emphasis in original)

Ball proposed limiting the military commitment to 15 battalions (72,000) and restricting their combat role. Bombing in North Vietnam would continue, but the area around Hanoi-Haiphong and the area close to China would be avoided.

He also proposed a political program to bring about negotiations and an international agreement guaranteed by the U.S., the U.S.S.R. and others and supervised by an international commission, and he made these points, among others:

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[131] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

> (1) In any political approaches so far, we have been the prisoners of whatever South Vietnamese government was momentarily in power. If we are ever to move toward a settlement it will probably be because the South Vietnamese government pulls the rug out from under us and makes its own deal *or* because we go forward quietly without advance prearrangement with Saigon.
>
> (2) So far we have not given the other side a reason to believe there is *any* flexibility in our negotiating approach. And the other side has been unwilling to accept what *in their terms* is complete capitulation. (emphasis in original)

Ball surveyed, and found tolerable, the probable reactions of Asian nations if the U.S. decided to limit its military commitment in Vietnam and to negotiate a settlement. He also concluded that a compromise settlement would not have a "major impact on the credibility of our commitments around the world":

> On balance I believe we would more seriously undermine the effectiveness of our world leadership by continuing the war and deepening our involvement than by pursuing a carefully plotted course toward a compromise solution. In spite of the number of powers that have—in response to our pleading—given verbal support from feelings of loyalty and dependence, we cannot ignore the fact that the war is vastly unpopular and that our role in it is perceptibly eroding the respect and confidence with which other nations regard us. We have not persuaded our friends or allies that our further involvement is essential to the defense of freedom in the Cold War. Moreover, the more men we deploy in the jungles of South Vietnam the more we contribute to a growing world anxiety and mistrust.

In a memorandum to the President on July 1, Secretary of State Rusk took a position almost opposite that of Under Secretary Ball. "The central objective of the United States in South Viet-Nam," he said, "must be to insure that North Viet-Nam not succeed in taking over or determining the future of South Viet-Nam by force. We must accomplish this objective without a general war if possible." "The integrity of the U.S. commitment," he added, "is the principal pillar of peace throughout the world. If that commitment becomes unreliable, the communist world would draw conclusions that would lead to our ruin and almost certainly to a catastrophic war. So long as the South Vietnamese are prepared to fight for themselves, we cannot abandon them without disaster to peace and to our interests throughout the world."[132]

For his part, Secretary of Defense McNamara, in a memorandum to the President which went through several drafts by McNaughton before the final version on July 1 based on a draft of June 26, recommended approval of the 44 battalion request. The draft of June 26 has not been located. An earlier draft of June 24 [133] recommended the deployment of 40 battalions (200,000) of

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[132] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[133] McNaughton's third draft, prepared on June 24, is attached to a memorandum from Unger to Ball on June 25 (U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S) in which Unger suggested language on expanded political moves to be incorporated into the next revision.

Although the June 26 draft was sent to the White House, it apparently is not contained in the papers at the Johnson Library.

U.S. ground combat forces plus other military units, a Reserve call-up of 100,000, and the extension of all tours of duty for those already in the service. It also proposed a major increase in U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, together with a sea, rail and road quarantine of war supplies into North Vietnam by mining the harbors of North Vietnam, bombing of port facilities as well as rail and highway bridges north of Hanoi, and armed reconnaissance of up to 1,000 sorties a week against lines of communication in North Vietnam with China. Other objectives of increased bombing would be to destroy North Vietnamese war-making supplies and facilities, interdict the movement of war supplies in North Vietnam and from there to South Vietnam, and to destroy North Vietnamese airfields and SAM sites "as necessary" to accomplish these objectives.

The June 24 draft also called for expanded political programs, both diplomatic moves and economic and other initiatives inside South Vietnam.

On July 30, McGeorge Bundy sent McNamara a sharply worded response to the draft of June 26:[134]

> This memorandum is designed to raise questions and not to answer them, and I am afraid it may sound unhelpful.
>
> The draft memorandum to the President of June 26 seems to me to have grave limitations.
>
> 1. It proposes a doubling of our presently planned strength in South Vietnam, a tripling of air effort in the north, and a new and very important program of naval quarantine. It proposes this new land commitment at a time when our troops are entirely untested in the kind of warfare projected. It proposes greatly extended air action when the value of the air action we have taken is sharply disputed. It proposes naval quarantine by mining at a time when nearly everyone agrees the real question is not in Hanoi, but in South Vietnam. My first reaction is that this program is rash to the point of folly.
> 2. The memorandum itself points out that the test of the success of any program in the near future will be in South Vietnam. I agree with this view. But I think it far from clear that these drastic changes will have commensurate significance in this decisive field. In particular, I see no reason to suppose that the Viet Cong will accommodate us by fighting the kind of war we desire. Fragmentary evidence so far suggests that they intend to avoid direct contact with major US forces and concentrate their efforts against the Vietnamese Army. I think the odds are that if we put in 40-50 battalions with the missions here proposed, we shall find them only lightly engaged and ineffective in hot pursuit.

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[134] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

Berman, *Planning a Tragedy*, cites, by date, the June 26 McNamara memorandum, but in discussing it, as well as Bundy's June 30 memorandum, he uses McNamara's July 1 version without noting that Bundy's memorandum was addressed to the June 26 version. He also discusses the CIA memorandum of June 30 (see below), again without noting that it, too, was in response to the June 26 version of the McNamara memorandum.

3. The paper does not discuss the question of agreements with the Vietnamese Government before we move to a 200 thousand-man level. The apparent basis for doing this is simply the increasing weakness of Vietnamese forces. But this is a slippery slope toward total US responsibility and corresponding fecklessness on the Vietnamese side.

4. The paper also omits examination of the upper limit of US liability. If we need 200 thousand men now for these quite limited missions, may we not need 400 thousand later? Is this a rational course of action? Is there any real prospect that US regular forces can conduct the anti-guerrilla operations which would probably remain the central problem in South Vietnam?

5. The suggestion of a naval quarantine is particularly drastic and highly important. I think it should be separated from the rest of the paper. A blockade by mining would have both greater risks and much greater impact. It needs a kind of study it has not had (as far as I know) before it is seriously proposed.

6. This paper omits certain additional possibilities that should be considered before a specific program of pressure is adopted:

> (1) It is within our power to give much more drastic warnings to Hanoi than any we have yet given. If General Eisenhower is right in his belief that it was the prospect of nuclear attack which brought an armistice in Korea, we should at least consider what realistic threat of larger action is available to us for communication to Hanoi. A full interdiction of supplies to North Vietnam by air and sea is a possible candidate for such an ultimatum. These are weapons which may be more useful to us if we do not have to use them.
>
> (2) The paper passes by the possibility that stronger interdiction of north-south traffic might be possible by combining land, sea, and air action. I am not persuaded by what I have heard in casual comments of the impossibility of tightening these pressures by combined action. Is there no prospect that special forces could hold critical strong points in Laos along the Ho Chi Minh Trail? Is it impossible to tighten controls along the DMZ? Have we *really* done all we can in naval patrol?

7. The timing of an expanded effort needs examination. It is not at all clear that we should make these kinds of decisions early in July with the very fragmentary evidence available to us now on a number of critical points: the tactics of the VC, the prospects of the Ky Government, and the effectiveness of US forces in these new roles.

8. Any expanded program needs to have a clear sense of its own internal momentum. The paper does not face this problem. If US casualties go up sharply, what further actions do we propose to take or not to take? More broadly still, what is the real object of the exercise? If it is to get to the conference table, what results do we seek there? Still

> more brutally, do we want to invest 200 thousand men to cover an eventual retreat? Can we not do that just as well where we are?

The CIA also prepared and distributed on June 30, 1965 a statement commenting on McNamara's June 26 draft memorandum.[135] Generally, the agency agreed with McNamara's emphasis on the need to increase U.S. forces in Vietnam in order to block the Communists: "It appears obviously essential to provide a breathing spell in South Vietnam while the government of South Vietnam and its armed forces can prepare themselves to once again apply the political and military counterinsurgency measures necessary to put the VC on the defensive. It follows, therefore, that the augmentation and deployment of US forces in South Vietnam must be adequate beyond question to prevent an ARVN collapse this year."

Moreover, the CIA stressed the need for U.S. forces to be used in active combat; while warning that the Communists might revert to guerrilla warfare:

> The more directly and effectively US forces can be used in combat against major concentrations and base areas of the Viet Cong, the sooner can it be demonstrated that VC/DRV efforts to win a decisive victory this year are fruitless. It should not be expected, however, that the Viet Cong will necessarily stand and fight against superior forces. Rather they may drop backward a step to smaller-scale harassment and hit-and-run raids in which they do not encounter superior US combat units. Not until they themselves are being hounded, harassed and hurt in many areas without prospect of relief will there be a likelihood of the VC/DRV seeking a respite via the conference table or by any other device.

The CIA questioned two of McNamara's proposals: first, the proposed expansion of air attacks on the North "is probably broader than necessary, in view of our conviction that the issue must ultimately be settled in the South, and in view of some of the risks involved" (which the memo went on to discuss); second, McNamara's proposed diplomatic initiatives, most of which had been tried unsuccessfully, were of dubious value.

On July 1, McNamara sent the President the June 26 memorandum as revised on July 1.[136] It included the recommendations for expanded military and political moves cited above, except that it called for 34 U.S. battalions and 10 from other countries rather than 40 U. S. battalions, and the recommendation for destruction of port facilities was dropped (but not that for mining the harbors).

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[135] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, "Comments on the Secretary of Defense's 26 June 1965 Memorandum," June 30, 1965.

[136] Same location. Several days before he prepared the memorandum, McNamara had received a first-hand report from one of his key associates, Paul H. Nitze, Secretary of the Navy (and formerly head of State's Policy Planning Staff in the Truman administration). Nitze had spent a week in Vietnam in mid-June, and when he returned he told McNamara that he thought the war was lost. "It would take 'an absolutely immense effort,' he said, to salvage the crumbling Saigon government. Even if the President decided to make that effort—and if he were President, Nitze said, he would not—he 'doubted very much' whether the United States could get a sufficiently large and effective fighting force into South Vietnam in time to prevent a Communist victory. McNamara asked Nitze: 'What do you think the effect will be if we let this whole thing collapse?' Nitze answered: 'Very bad indeed!' He thought for a while, then added: 'I just know it is going to be bad either way.'" Marvin Kalb and Elie Abel, *Roots of Involvement, The U.S. in Asia 1784-1971* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), pp. 188-189.

After discussing also a series of international political initiatives which the U.S. could take to bolster its case, including the possibility of another bombing pause, McNamara gave this estimate of the success of the proposed program:

> 1. *Militarily.* The success of the above program from a military point of view turns on whether the increased effort stems the tide in the South; that in turn depends on two things—on whether the US forces can be effective in a quick-reaction reserve role, a role in which they have not been tested. The number of US troops is too small to make a significant difference in the traditional 10-1 government-guerrilla formula, but it is not too small to make a significant difference in the kind of war which seems to be evolving in Vietnam—a "Third Stage" or conventional war in which it is easier to identify, locate and attack the enemy. (South Vietnam has 141 battalions as compared with an estimated equivalent number of VC battalions. The 44 US/3d country battalions mentioned above are the equivalent of 100 South Vietnamese battalions.)
>
> 2. *Politically.* It is frequently alleged that such a large expansion of US military personnel, their expanded military role (which would put them in close contact and offer some degree of control over South Vietnamese citizens), and the inevitable expansion of US voice in the operation of the GVN economy and facilities, command and government services will be unpopular; it is said that they could lead to the rejection of the government which supported this American presence, to an irresistible pressure for expulsion of the Americans, and to the greatly increased saleability of Communist propaganda. Whether these allegations are true, we do not know.
>
> > The political initiatives are likely to be successful in the early stages only to demonstrate US good faith; they will pay off toward an actual settlement only after the tide begins to turn (unless we lower our sights substantially). The tide almost certainly cannot begin to turn in less than a few months, and may not for a year or more; the war is one of attrition and will be a long one. Since troops once committed as a practical matter cannot be removed, since US casualties will rise, since we should take call-up actions to support the additional forces in Vietnam, the test of endurance may be as much in the United States as in Vietnam.
>
> 3. *Generally (CIA estimate).*[137] Over the longer term we doubt if the Communists are likely to change their basic strategy in Vietnam (i.e., aggressive and steadily mounting insurgency) unless and until two conditions prevail: (1) they are forced to accept a situation in the war in the South which offers them no prospect of an early victory and no grounds for hope that they can simply outlast the US and (2) North Vietnam itself is under continuing and increasingly damaging punitive attack. So long as the Communists think they scent the possibility of an early victory (which is probably now the case), we believe

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[137] This section was taken from the CIA memorandum of June 30, cited above.

> that they will persevere and accept extremely severe damage to the North. Conversely, if North Vietnam itself is not hurting, Hanoi's doctrinaire leaders will probably be ready to carry ~~on the~~ Southern struggle almost indefinitely. If, however, both of the conditions outlined above should be brought to pass, we believe Hanoi probably would, at least for a period of time, alter its basic strategy and course of action in South Vietnam.
>
> Hanoi might do so in several ways. Going for a conference as a political way of gaining a respite from attack would be one. Alternatively it might reduce the level of insurgent activity in the hopes that this would force the US to stop its punishment of the North but not prevent the US and GVN from remaining subject to wearying harassment in the South. Or, Hanoi might order the VC to suspend operations in the hopes that in a period of temporary tranquility, domestic and international opinion would force the US to disengage without destroying the VC apparatus or the roots of VC strength. Finally, Hanoi might decide that the US/GVN will to fight could still be broken and the tide of war turned back again in favor of the VC by launching a massive PAVN assault on the South. This is a less likely option in the circumstances we have posited, but still a contingency for which the US must be prepared.

Included in McNamara's memorandum was a brief statement about the estimated domestic reaction: "Even though casualties will increase and the war will continue for some time, the United States public will support this course of action because it is a combined military-political program designed and likely to bring about a favorable solution to the Vietnam problem."

Despite McGeorge Bundy's memorandum of June 30, McNamara appears to have made only minor changes from his earlier draft, and to have ignored almost all of Bundy's questions. "This leaves," according to William Bundy, "an absolutely teasing question: Was McNamara shot down by the President at some point? Because these [recommended] actions do not recur. By the time McNamara gets his track shoes on and goes out to Vietnam these are not part of his kit bag."[138]

The Views of William Bundy and the Chiefs of Mission in the East Asia Bureau

On June 14, 1965, William Bundy sent a "Top Secret, Personal and Confidential" memorandum to U.S. Chiefs of Mission in the countries in his East Asia region—Edwin O. Reischauer, Ambassador to Japan, Graham Martin, Ambassador to Thailand, William H. Sullivan, Ambassador to Laos, Winthrop Brown, Ambassador to South Korea, and Edmund E. Rice, U.S. Consul General in Hong Kong—asking for their comments on three possible courses of U.S. action.[139]

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[138] CRS Interview with William Bundy, Sept. 29, 1986.

[139] Bundy's letter and the replies from Reischauer and from Rice on June 24, from Sullivan on June 28, and from Martin on June 30 (Bangkok to Washington 2158), are in the U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers). Ambassador Brown's reply has not been located.

Bundy said that the situation in South Vietnam was "going badly" and was "very gloomy indeed." Politically, although the new government "may produce some clearing of the air and a temporary closing of ranks," there were still deep divisions that could cause it to founder. "We just have not found key leadership or the spirit of unity that is necessary, and there must be underneath it all a growing spirit of discouragement and of *sauve qui peut* which may well go on eroding the political base."

On the military side, Bundy said, the intensified Communist effort in late May and early June had resulted in a ". . . much poorer military performance on the Vietnamese side than we had hoped for or than we have been prepared to admit in public. . . . In short, the general judgment on the spot is that Vietnamese military morale is now marginal."

There were, Bundy said, three possible courses of action for the United States:

> (A) Broadening the air strikes to include targets in Hanoi and Haiphong, initially on a selective basis but almost inevitably, as we were drawn into air combat or into the SAM fire zones, to include fairly sweeping attacks. Our best judgment here is that this would not cause Hanoi to desist as long as it thinks it is winning in the South, it might conceivably bring in Chinese air from Chinese bases (we think not Chinese ground forces at first, although this might become a possibility if we became engaged in major air attacks on Chinese air bases), it would certainly create massive protest in third countries, including the possible loss of official backing even in such countries as Britain, and it might cause North Viet-Nam to commit its divisions quite openly in the South (though this is only a matter of degree). I am also particularly concerned that this action might stir the latent feelings in Japan or even to some extent in Korea that white men were beating up on Asians simply because their Asian allies could not handle the situation in the South.
>
> (B) We could conceivably mine the Haiphong channel and/or blockade North Viet-Nam. Here the worry is that we would not in fact hurt the North Vietnamese as much as we would turn them to the Chinese for support, although one or two well placed strikes on the rail lines would make it most difficult for the Chinese to replace the POL [petroleum, oil, lubricants] in particular. Here too I wonder about the general Asian reaction to such action, and also about the specific Japanese reaction in view of the involvement of their shipping.
>
> (C) We could further step up our ground combat force involvement. By mid-July, on present plans, we will have roughly 20,000 ground combat forces and an over-all total of 70,000 in all categories, ground and air, in South Viet-Nam. Our military on the ground are urging increases up to 100,000 or perhaps 150,000 as being needed to hold the VC in check during the Monsoon season. By the time you get this, we may have reached decisions on some degree of increase, and I will not attempt to pre-judge this decision. The key point, to me, is we may be approaching the point at which the South Vietnamese themselves might conclude we were taking over the war, and

> that this might result in a slackening of their own effort and perhaps even, as our forces became even more deeply involved, in a situation where we would be regarded by the local population, as we destroyed their villages in pursuit of the VC, as acting for all practical purposes like the French. From a purely military standpoint, a case can be made that we should put in whatever is necessary, up to even 300,000 men if that is required. But the underlying worry must be whether, with South Vietnamese morale and resolution so very different from what the two were in Korea, we would not end up fighting the whole war in a country that would be at best submissive and at worst downright hostile.

"The worst of it," Bundy added, "is that no combination of the three possible actions—if in fact Vietnamese morale goes down and defeats continue—seems likely to raise the chances of real success from perhaps (by hypothesis) 15 percent without such actions to 25-30 percent with them. Perhaps that chance is higher with a massive ground force commitment, but that involves the imponderable and possibly truly disastrous case of the South Vietnamese themselves turning against us."

The replies to Bundy, although not as pessimistic, reflected his feelings about the situation. (As they were received, Bundy circulated them to Rusk, McNamara and McGeorge Bundy.) Rice, a veteran State Department China specialist who was then in charge of a small group at the American Consulate General in Hong Kong responsible for monitoring developments in China, agreed with Bundy that the situation in Vietnam was becoming critical and that action needed to be taken to prevent a disaster.[140] "All in all," Rice said, "we have gained the impression that the monsoon months [May-September] will be critical, and that the opposition is unlikely to show much interest in negotiations until that period is over and unless we can get through it in fair shape. In the absence of a negotiated settlement then, of course, the best we can see ahead would be a long, hard road, but not the end of it." He also said he had shown Bundy's memorandum to the four ranking China specialists on his staff, and that he and they ". . . all reacted the same way: Despite the sombre gravity of the picture you painted, we were encouraged by the fact that you presented it as you did—we had been disturbed by the lack of evidence that those in authority in Washington were facing the facts with unillusioned eyes."

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[140] In a cable to Bundy on June 6, 1965, Rice had warned that the Chinese seemed to be fearful of a U.S. attack on China, and were preparing for such an eventuality while continuing to aid and abet the North Vietnamese. "I accordingly feel," Rice said, "we should in prudence measure carefully our present and contemplated actions against this Chicom mood of well-calculated resolve to determine whether we should hold down tempo of our escalation or perhaps reverse it. Either the pursuit of objectives which are unattainable or successive steps of escalation each unsuited to attainment of our objectives can only magnify our problems and may well lead into situations which, if we foresaw them clearly, we would avoid at almost any cost." He added, with respect to the question of sending additional U.S. forces, ". . . [the] prognosis for South Vietnam is not such that we should link fate our nation on the outcome there. Moreover I do not believe, nor have I heard any member my country team profess to believe that preponderant U.S. force could overcome the Viet Cong. Consequently, I for one would regard with dismay much continuation of such escalation." U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Hong Kong to Washington 1851, June 6, 1965.

Rice and his colleagues in Hong Kong were strongly opposed to course A (extending the bombing to include the Hanoi-Haiphong area) and were also opposed to course B (mining and/or a blockade). They thought that bombing in the Hanoi-Haiphong area would deprive the U.S. of the possible leverage of threats to the North Vietnamese industrial base (the importance of which they thought had been over-assessed). "Shoot the hostage and who will pay ransom for him?" It would also increase the bitterness of the North Vietnamese toward the U.S. Moreover, it would be "a more complex, difficult, and costly business than some people may imagine," and could also result in counteraction by the Chinese Air Force and lead to U.S. attacks on airfields in China.

Mining and/or a blockade, Rice said, would not be "worth the strain and pain" in relations with other countries which were shipping by sea into North Vietnam, including the possibility of a confrontation with the Russians. Moreover, the Communists would find other means of transporting essential materials.

Course C—U.S. troops—was also risky, Rice said, and might not achieve the desired results. He said he "might well favor" a war in Southeast Asia which would be no more costly than the Korean war, and would produce "as favorable and clear-cut an outcome." "But the Indochinese peninsula is wider, the terrain is unfavorable to our forces, the local populace is war-weary instead of fighting-mad at the invading forces, and we would concurrently face guerrilla-type operations which were virtually absent during the Korean campaign and which we cannot handle even now." If it looked as if course C would stave off defeat during the monsoons, Rice said he would be willing to "feel our way along it," while restraining bombing. "Unrestrained bombing combined with course 'C' would increase the total risk, beyond that I think we should run, of a larger-scale DRV—and more especially ChiCom—involvement." Course C would be preferable, however, to withdrawing or to arranging to be invited to withdraw.

If defeat were staved off during the monsoons by the use of U.S. troops, but if the chances for success still appeared dim, then, Rice said, the U.S. "might, by offering concessions which we now resist as too painful [he did not elaborate on this point], have some chance of getting a negotiated settlement. . . ."

If course C worked better than expected, the U.S. could then reassess its goal and the best means of achieving it. "I think the best course 'C' would give us would be some months of stalemate before the counter-productive factors become fully operative. But it might just transpire that we could largely choke down logistical and manpower support from the DRV to the Viet Cong, and that U.S. forces with suitable ARVN guides and interpreters could operate satisfactorily—especially away from populated areas."

Rice added that he and his Hong Kong colleagues were ". . . against grabbing at straws and increasing the U.S. commitment if that looks unlikely to increase measurably our chances of coming out well." He said that as many as 300,000 U.S. troops—the number Bundy had mentioned—would be "dangerously excessive," and he agreed with Bundy's concern that this would cause the South Vietnamese "to slacken their own efforts and to regard us more and more as they did the French."

Rice said, however, that he and his colleagues ". . . regard with great uneasiness the change of atmosphere in this area which would follow upon a defeat in Vietnam," adding: "I know that even now many Chinese in Hong Kong regard the future of this whole area with a marked degree of pessimism: some are acquiring portfolios of American stocks reaching into the millions. . . ." [141]

U.S. action in Vietnam, according to Rice, had helped to disprove the contention of the Chinese that Communist insurrections could be carried out without great danger to those providing them with support and encouragement, but if the Communists were to win in Vietnam this would strengthen the Chinese case. "I fear," Rice added, "some of our friends in the underdeveloped countries will measurably lose heart if the Communists succeed in Vietnam, though I would hope others would begin to rely more on their own efforts. Communist China's leaders will become even more insufferably arrogant and dangerous. They may through arrogance overplay their hand, but that remains problematical."

Rice concluded: "We may be forced out of Vietnam, but if we learn what the limits of our capabilities are without getting into a wider and disastrous war, it will not spell the end of U.S. power as distinguished from our illusions about its uses."

William Sullivan, the highly-respected U.S. Ambassador to Laos, who had been involved with the Vietnam question for many years, began his reply by noting that June 14, the day of Bundy's memorandum, "must have been a gloomy afternoon in Foggy Bottom [the area where the State Department is located] and I suspect you have had many of them in the past few weeks." But while he agreed that there was a "rather poor prospect for South Vietnam," Sullivan said he thought there was also "very little joy on the other side of the fence," and that Bundy was underestimating that aspect. "The fatality rate among the Viet Cong," he said, "has been intense. Their living conditions are atrocious. If the state of morale among those in the jungles of South Vietnam is in any way comparable to those whom we occasionally flush out here in Laos, they are far from the confident, cocky heroes that they paint themselves. . . . Therefore I would start out by suggesting that 'war is hell' and that it can be generally postulated that the other fellow is suffering just as badly as our friends are." He added: ". . . I think it will be a tough summer and a tough winter as well, but by the same token, I think nothing is going to collapse as you seem to suspect, either on our side or their side of the fence."

Sullivan said that in considering the three possible courses of military action, ". . . I think we first have to develop some idea of the sort of light which we may expect to see when the end of the tunnel comes in view. As you know . . . I have always felt that this light would be dim rather than bright. In fact, the best that I think we can hope for is an arrangement in which the North Vietnamese become fed up with the Chinese, the Chinese thoroughly outrage the Russians, and the Russians finally accept the responsibility for the care and feeding of North Vietnam."

He continued:

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[141] At this point in Rice's letter, approximately two and two-thirds lines have been excised.

> Once we have arrived at that situation I would expect that we could reach some political settlement of the Vietnam affair under the general sponsorship of ourselves and the Russians. Such a settlement would leave North Vietnam intact, Communist, and potentially aggressive. Its enforcement would depend upon the extremely tentative rapport we might be able to preserve with the Russians against the provocations of the Chinese and upon the hope that a larger scale economic development program in Southeast Asia will immunize the neighbors somewhat against the ambitions of North Vietnam, and at the same time slake those ambitions by providing some economic relief to North Vietnam itself.

With respect to Course A (extending the bombing), Sullivan said that he thought of bombing "strictly as a political bargaining tool," and that the cessation of bombing could be used in negotiations as a *quid pro quo* for the cessation of North Vietnamese aggression and subversion. He was not in favor of massive bombing, especially of civilian installations, he said, because the military effect would be "rather negligible" and because "it would run contrary to the proposition that we are willing to see North Vietnam remain intact but under Soviet tutelage." Likewise, he opposed Course B (mining or a blockade), primarily because seaborne traffic would be the primary means which the Russians would use to supply North Vietnam "if it took over its maintenance from the Chinese."

With respect to Course C (U.S. troops), Sullivan said that while he shared the various misgivings about a U.S. ground commitment in South Vietnam, ". . . I see no practical alternative in the current circumstances except to provide the additional American troops which will prove necessary to hold the line, grind up the DRV units currently south of the parallel, and make the logisitics problem for the DRV greater than they can continue to sustain by clandestine means. In short, I believe we ultimately have to lick them on the ground in South Vietnam and that a good portion of this licking will have to be administered by U.S. troops. . . . [W]hile it will take time, cost lives, cost money and cause irritations among our allies, we will have to hang on, grind through on the ground and patiently advise both friend and enemy that this is our intent."

The use of American forces in Vietnam, Sullivan added, would also strengthen the U.S. bargaining position in negotiations.

While undertaking military operations, he said, the U.S. ". . . must continue our posture of 'more in sorrow than in anger.' We must constantly talk of peace, regularly seek 'discussions,' but always on the basis of a clearly, indeed adamantly, stated position which makes it obvious that we will continue our military operations until some understandings are reached concerning disengagement."

Sullivan concluded his reply to Bundy by saying that he did not want to speculate about the situation if the U.S. were to lose. "This is partly because, from the Vientiane [capital of Laos] perspective, I see it as all black. It is also partly because I think you are getting enough of that pounded into you by the types around Georgetown and the diplomatic community in Washington."

Graham Martin, Ambassador to Thailand, another experienced and highly regarded Foreign Service officer, who, after leaving Thailand, became U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam where he served until the final withdrawal of U.S. personnel in 1975, was even more optimistic than Sullivan. He told Bundy that he was "rather startled" by the "extreme pessimism" of his memorandum, "which I personally believe to be unwarranted." "As it looks from here," Martin said, "it does not seem that the situation in SVN is going all that badly. . . . We have lost a good man in Quat. . . . So now we have Ky—too young, too rash, too impetuous—where Quat was too cautious. But I don't really feel discouraged that we have been unable to achieve perfection. And the enormously encouraging thing is that this transition was not a coup—it was a rather mature, negotiated transition. . . . Therefore while in application of purely Western logic, one might well conclude that [quoting Bundy's memorandum] 'there must be underneath it all a growing spirit of discouragement and of *sauve qui peut*' I do not think this necessarily follows in a Vietnamese context."

Martin also said that available information, ". . . simply does not bear out the conclusion that the Vietnamese military performance has been as poor as portrayed. . . . My impression is that they have in fact done somewhat better than one might have expected." The Communists, he said, were, as anticipated, responding to U.S. bombing by escalating their military operations to order to erode the "will to exist" of both the U.S. and South Vietnam in the hope of achieving at least a coalition regime.

With respect to the three courses of action, Martin said that he was opposed to increased bombing, mining and/or a blockade because all of the targets involved "should be hostages for future," and because, in the case of bombing, the U.S. should be concentrating on the "corrider"—the infiltration route in the southern part of North Vietnam along which personnel and supplies moved into South Vietnam. As for U.S. troops, he said that, "If we continue to hold, as well as we so far have, I would doubt we need to actually deploy these troops now. What we do need is a far more vigorous utilization of all the resources we now have available, a far more imaginative appraisal of contributions that could be obtained in the area, and somehow a correction of present courses of action which signal that we want to do the job ourselves and neither want nor need help." He added:

> . . . achievement of our objectives in SEA [Southeast Asia] is a perfectly feasible operation. But the application of military force must be kept limited, and tactical military advantages of increasing the force must always be weighed in view of the fact that military force here, while vital and essential, is nevertheless a small element in a much more complex political and psychological operation.
>
> If we fail to achieve our objective in South Vietnam, I am rather certain that future historians will record that it was only because we refused to use intelligently the resources available to us.

Edwin Reischauer's reply to Bundy consisted primarily of comments about the effects on Japan of the three possible courses of action, as well as general comments about the effects of the war on

U.S. relations with other countries, following which he briefly discussed, in light of these remarks, the three courses of action.

For Japan, Reischauer said, the most damaging course of action would be Course A, the bombing of cities, which the Japanese would tend to associate with their own experience. Mining of Haiphong and/or a blockade "would do only minor damage to us in Japan." The third course of action—U.S. troops—would not cause serious repercussions unless the Vietnamese reacted adversely, in which case the Japanese would strongly react against the U.S. fighting a "hopeless war against 'nationalism' in Asia." On the other hand, Reischauer said, if the situation in Vietnam proved untenable and the U.S. withdrew, this could lead to increased neutralist feelings in Japan.

On the broader question of U.S. policy, Reischauer said that he considered what happened in Vietnam itself to be a "very minor point" compared to the effect of the outcome of the war and of methods used in fighting the war on three basic U.S. policy areas. First, with respect to the less-developed countries (LDCs), especially in Asia, there were two factors which he said "will in large part determine to what extent and at what cost other LDCs can be effectively defended against 'wars of national liberation' ": (1) the will of other LDCs to withstand Communist subversions and their confidence in U.S. protection, and, (2) the attitude of the Chinese and other Communist countries toward the U.S. and their confidence in using guerrilla warfare to take over the LDCs.

The second basic policy area, Reischauer said, was the "informal 'grand alliance' of the advanced nations of the free world," which could be damaged by a U.S. course of action in Vietnam that adversely affected U.S.-Japanese relationships.

The third basic policy area which would be affected was U.S. relations with the Soviet Union, and the relations of the Soviet Union with China.

Reischauer said that if, as Bundy predicted, the chances of success in Vietnam were only 15-20 percent, any one of the three courses of action should be avoided if it "would have appreciably more adverse than useful effects" in the three policy areas. He continued:

> I feel sure that bombing the big cities would have seriously adverse repercussions in policy areas 2 and 3 (and also probably in area 1) and therefore should clearly be avoided. Blockading North Vietnam, I believe, would have somewhat adverse reactions in policy area 2 and possibly in policy area 3, so should probably not be tried if the strategic results in Vietnam are as marginal as you say. Increasing our ground troops would, I feel, have few if any bad repercussions in any of these policy areas, until it rises to the point where it produces South Vietnamese apathy or antipathy, at which point it would become highly disadvantageous in all three policy areas. Therefore, the trick here is to discover where that point is and to stay safely under it.

"Thus," Reischauer added, "I feel that, if we are to lose, our preferences should be in the order of (c), (b), (a), and that we should therefore start working for the least disastrous outcome in the event of defeat. . . ." Rather than a withdrawal as a result either of a collapse or "defection" of the Government of South Vietnam, or "a deal with Hanoi or international conference which did little more than paper over our defeat," he thought that the U.S. should strive for an international conference "in which an international body takes on some responsibilities in SVN and . . . [the] whole concept of international responsibility for security of LDCs is strengthened." "We should remember," he said, "that Vietnam in itself is only a very small counter in world strategy and that, if we do lose there, we must be sure that this defeat does not so cripple us that we emerge from this battle unable to fight again. In other words, developing a method to stop future 'wars of liberation' in the LDCs is much more important to us than victory in Vietnam itself." The effort to negotiate an international settlement of the kind he proposed would, he said, "lay a slightly improved foundation for an international effort to stop the forward moving wave of 'wars of liberation' elsewhere among the LDCs."

In such an international undertaking, Reischauer said, the U.S. should be as forthcoming as possible, not only to satisfy doubts and criticism, but because such a posture would produce the best results. Furthermore, the Communists probably would not participate, and this would strengthen the U.S. position. He proposed that the NLF should be invited to become a party to the conference, that the U.S. should welcome neutralization of the whole Southeast Asian Peninsula (with guarantees for the security of Thailand and Malaya), and that there should be a "readiness" to discuss U.N. membership for China. If handled well, he added, such a conference "could greatly strengthen the 'grand alliance' and, I believe, help set up the international defense line that is so badly needed to stop future 'wars of national liberation.' "

On June 30, 1965, William Bundy submitted a memorandum to the President in which he took what he called a "middle way" position between Ball's "ultimatum/withdrawal" and McNamara's proposal for escalation.[142] In deciding to submit his own memorandum, Bundy said later that he was influenced by U. Alexis Johnson, "who told many of us of his feeling that the situation was not quite so critical as it was being painted by Westmoreland, and that American forces above 15 battalions were sure to raise serious problems," as well as by comments on the situation from the Chiefs of Mission whose views he had solicited.[143]

Ball's proposal, Bundy said in his memorandum, ". . . would be an abandonment of the South Vietnamese at a time when the fight is not, and certainly does not appear to the world and to Asian countries to be, going all that badly. Such an abandonment would leave us almost no leverage as to South Vietnam, and would create an immediate and maximum shock wave for Thailand and the rest of Asia. The rationale that it was all the fault of the South Vietnamese, *in these circumstances,* where we ourselves had pulled the plug, would have almost no off-setting effect. The American public would not understand such a quick reversal of our position, and the political effects at home would be most serious. There might also be serious adverse effects on our whole leadership position." (emphasis in original)

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[142] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, "Holding on in South Vietnam," June 30, 1965.
[143] Bundy MS., ch. 26, p. 26.

On the other hand, Bundy said, the proposed deployment of major U.S. ground forces might not be effective. ". . . [N]one of us can now judge the extent to which major U.S. combat forces would cause the Vietnamese government and army to think we were going to do the job for them. Nor can we judge the extent to which the people in the countryside, who have been exposed constantly to VC propaganda . . . [that] the fight is against the American successors to the French, would start really to buy this time when they saw U.S. forces engaged in the countryside, and hence flock to the VC banner. . . . In short, we have to make our own judgment based on the present reading of popular feeling in South Vietnam, and based above all on the French experience."[144]

This was William Bundy's conclusion:

> From these factors, I would judge there is a point of sharply diminishing returns and adverse consequences that may lie somewhere between 70,000 and 100,000 U.S. forces in total, and a fairly limited number of combat battalions that will actually get into the countryside to fight in case of need. If the Saigon government and its army perform better, U.S. forces fighting alongside a strong Vietnamese army might have little if any of these adverse effects. Until we have tested the water much further than at present, the odds favor a considerably more negative view of the actual effectiveness over any extended period of major added U.S. forces. In short, whatever we think the chances are now of making the effort in the South really costly to Hanoi, the present deployment of major added U.S. forces gives no real promise of helping the chances for this kind of success. If the South Vietnamese government and army perform well, the role and need of U.S. forces will become clear, and political liabilities may be less than we anticipate in the future. If the South Vietnamese government and army encounter a series of reverses in the next two months, the odds will rise that our own intervention would appear to be turning the conflict into a white man's war with the U.S. in the shoes of the French. In the first case, we can afford to wait at least in degree. In the second case, the added chances of success seem very small.

Based on this analysis, Bundy proposed the following:

> (1) We should have enough ground combat forces to give the reserve/reaction concept a fair test, but at the same time not to exceed significantly whatever the current Plimsoll line[145] may be. This would appear to mean carrying through present decisions up to about 75,000 in total and possibly the early additional Marine deployments of an additional 8,000-10,000. We

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[144] In connection with Bundy's paper, a cable was sent to Taylor on June 30, 1965, asking for an immediate assessment of local reactions to the U.S. forces already in Vietnam, followed by a broader study. U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Washington to Saigon 3091, June 30, 1965. The Mission replied that local reactions had been generally favorable. Same location, Saigon to Washington 9, July 1, 1965.

[145] The nautical expression, "Plimsoll line," which is the ship's load line (or lines), refers here to the point at which the adverse effects of U.S. troops on the South Vietnamese would begin to become a serious problem.

would then hold the air-mobile division for decision during the summer, realizing it would take roughly four weeks to deploy after a decision.

(2) Our air actions against the South should be carried on a maximum effective rate. This could include substantial use of B-52s against VC havens, recognizing that we look silly and arouse criticism if these do not show significant results.

William Bundy also proposed implementing the Acheson-Ball plan "to extend government administration, with reform measures, with progressive local elections, and with an amnesty to members of the Viet Cong who do not resist the extension of government authority province by province." In a suggestion that corresponded to the final Vietnam cease-fire agreement in 1973, Bundy said, "Such a political program would fall short of our present objectives of getting Hanoi formally to desist from all aid to the South. It would not call for the turning in of Viet Cong arms as an absolute condition, although much might be accomplished by the appeal of the program itself. It would leave the Hanoi-dominated, political apparatus in existence on a covert basis, and thus a major long-term problem for South Vietnam to handle. We believe these concessions are essential if Viet Cong members are to be attracted into the program and if Hanoi itself is to accept it in practice and not continue the fight to the finish."

The President Prepares to Act

At 5:50 p.m. on July 1, 1965, McGeorge Bundy sent the President a memorandum for a meeting on July 2. He said that he had just returned from a long session at the State Department at which the various papers had been discussed, and that there were two main alternatives: "George Ball's preference for a negotiated withdrawal, and Bob McNamara's recommendation of a substantial increase of military strength, with a call-up of reserves during this summer."[146]

Bundy told the President that Rusk and McNamara wanted the July 2 meeting to be kept small. "[They] . . . feel strongly that the George Ball paper should not be argued with you in front of any audience larger than yourself, Rusk, McNamara, Ball, and me. They feel that it is exceedingly dangerous to have this possibility reported in a wide circle. Moreover, both of them feel great reticence about expressing their innermost thoughts to you in front of any larger group." Bundy said that because of Rusk and McNamara's feelings, he would recommend that the meeting be kept small, but "the disadvantage of this is that it cuts you off from a chance to talk freely with other men who have expert opinions." "My personal, private opinion," he added, "is that both Rusk and McNamara are too diffident and that it would help you to have a few more people in the meeting," but he noted that this could be done afterwards in a larger meeting.

At 8:20 p.m. that evening (July 1), McGeorge Bundy sent the President the four papers from Ball, McNamara, Rusk, William Bundy, and in a cover note he said:[147]

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[146] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

[147] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

> The positions within the government are roughly as follows: McNamara and Ball honestly believe in their own recommendations, though Bob would readily accept advice to tone down those of his recommendations which move rapidly against Hanoi by bombing and blockade.
>
> Dean Rusk leans toward the McNamara program, adjusted downward in this same way.
>
> The second-level men in both State and Defense are not optimistic about the future prospects in Vietnam and are therefore very reluctant to see us move to a 44 battalion force with a call-up of reserves. So they would tend to cluster around the middle course suggested by my brother. They would like to see what happens this summer before getting much deeper in.
>
> The Joint Chiefs are strongly in favor of going in even further than McNamara. Specifically they want now to take out the SAM site, the IL-28s, and the MIGs in the Hanoi area.
>
> My hunch is that you will want to listen hard to George Ball and then reject his proposal. Discussion could then move to the narrow choice between my brother's course and McNamara's.

The memorandum continued:

> I think you may want to have pretty tight and hard analyses of some disputed questions like the following:
>
> 1. What are the chances of our getting into a white man's war with all the brown men against us or apathetic?
> 2. How much of the McNamara planning could be on a contingency basis with no decision until August or September?
> 3. What would a really full political and public relations campaign look like in both the Bundy option and the McNamara option?
> 4. What is the upper limit of our liability if we now go to 44 battalions?
> 5. Can we frame this program in such a way as to keep very clear our own determination to keep the war limited? (This is another way of stating question 4).
> 6. Can we get a cold, hard look at the question whether the current economic and military situation in Vietnam is so very bad that it may come apart even before this program gets into action? (I don't believe that it is that bad, but no one seems to be really sure of the facts today).

On July 2, the President met from 11:35 a.m. to 1:17 p.m. with Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy and Ball (the President had agreed to keep the meeting small). There are no known notes of the meeting, but according to William Bundy, it consisted of a discussion of the next steps to be taken rather than a discussion of the papers. Apparently the President had already decided to follow McNamara's recommendation and the advice of Rusk and to approve the Westmoreland request,[148] and did not feel the need to hold another discussion of the views of his advisers. One factor may have been the position taken by former President Eisenhower. At a luncheon on June 30 with President Johnson, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, General Wheeler and Senator Dirksen, Eisenhower apparently said that additional U.S. forces were needed in Vietnam.[149] He made the same point on July 2 when he called Johnson on another matter about a half an hour before the meeting of the President with his advisers on July 2. During this telephone call, Johnson told Eisenhower that he was getting ready to have a meeting on Vietnam. He said that McNamara, Westmoreland and Wheeler recommended expansion of U.S. military forces, while the State Department recommended following a modified plan until the end of the monsoon season. According to Eisenhower's memorandum of the conversation,[150] Johnson said that sending additional troops ". . . will stir up such people as [House Republican Leader Gerald] Ford—who is for continued bombing but no ground troops. . . . Also he has such people as Bobby Kennedy and Mansfield against him." The memorandum added, however, that Johnson said he would ". . . have to call up troops," and that, "he guessed this 'is your [Eisenhower's] view, conforming to the advice you gave me on Wednesday.' " Eisenhower replied that it was his view: ". . . when you go into a place merely to hold sections or enclaves you are paying a price and not winning. When you once appeal to force in an international situation involving military help for a nation, you have to go all out! This is a war, and as long as they (the enemy) are putting men down there, my advice is 'do what you have to do!' " It was his feeling, Eisenhower said, that, " 'We are not going to be run out of a free country that we helped to establish.' " Johnson responded that when the U.S. took stronger action ". . . 'they' say we will lose the British and Canadians and will be alone in the world." Eisenhower replied: ". . . we would still have the Australians and our own convictions."

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[148] In his 1969 "Notes Concerning the President's Major Decisions on Vietnam of February and July, 1965," U.S. Department of State, 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers), William Bundy said, "I had the distinct impression from a series of White House meetings that the President had made up his mind in late June that he would do what had to be done [approve Westmoreland's request]."

Eisenhower also said he was sorry to hear (the memorandum does not state when or how he heard) that the President would have to go to Congress for additional authority, and the President replied that he would have to do so because he would call up the Reserves.

The President said that his advisers felt Hanoi should not be bombed but that the harbors should be. The State Department, however, felt that this might result in intervention by Russia and China. According to the memorandum, "The President stated that we must convince Russia that if she does not bring about some understanding we will have to go all out." Eisenhower agreed, but pointed out that Johnson had "held the door open for negotiations as wide as possible."

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[149] There are no notes of the meeting, but in a memorandum that day (June 30) to the President, Marvin Watson said that General Clifton, the President's military aide, who had accompanied Eisenhower to the airport after the meeting, reported that Eisenhower made three statements.

"1. He had never been to a more stimulating meeting;

"2. Had never seen a man in better charge of Presidential responsibilities. A man completely in charge of the situation and very commanding with a solution; and

"3. If he was called on to plot a course from beginning to finish, he would not change anything you are doing." Johnson Library, EX FG 1.

[150] Eisenhower Library, "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation: 10:55 a.m., July 2, 1965," by Eisenhower's confidential secretary, Lillian H. Brown. The author is grateful to Professor Fred Greenstein of Princeton University for bringing this document to his attention.

"President Johnson then asked, 'Do you really think we can beat the Vietcong?'—this rather plaintively. General Eisenhower replied that this was hard to say because we cannot find out how many are imported and how many are rebels within the population of South Vietnam."

Johnson ended the conversation by telling Eisenhower that he wanted him to think about the matter and that they would talk again "in the next few weeks." He said that he wanted the "best advice possible," and that Eisenhower was "the best Chief of Staff he has. . . ."

At the July 2 meeting of the President and his advisers, it was decided that McNamara would go to Saigon in mid-July for a report on the situation on which the decision about Westmoreland's request could be based; Averell Harriman would go to Moscow to talk to the Russians (as proposed by Cooper and Thomson), using the pretext of a sightseeing trip;[151] and Ball would concentrate on exploring negotiating possibilities.

The next day (July 3), Ball, together with a small informal State-CIA working group headed by William Bundy which had been established for the purpose, began exploring negotiating possibilities, and two cables were sent to the U.S. Mission in Saigon, the first suggesting contacts with the NLF and the second with the North Vietnamese.[152] In the case of the NLF, the cable stated that in suggesting such contacts, "probably through cutouts" (the use of an intermediary by the CIA), "We have in mind particularly [the] recurring suggestions that in Front there is significant element of Sudiste [southern] thinking which, if properly nurtured, might draw at least part of NLF/VC away from Hanoi domination toward some accommodations with GVN on terms which not too unacceptable."[153] The cable noted, however, that in such an operation there would be the risk that the South Vietnamese would learn of the contacts and would assume that the U.S. was seeking to negotiate a withdrawal from Vietnam which might involve either acceptance of a coalition government in Saigon or NLF rule.

In the case of possible contact with the North Vietnamese, which the cable stated would be made "in circumstances where it would not signal weaknesses," this could be arranged by an appropriate U.S. official with a lower-level North Vietnamese official such as Mai Van Bo. On the initial contact, the U.S. official would state that the U.S. remained "ready without preconditions to discuss ways of moving toward a peaceful settlement and bringing military activity to an end." He would also state that there were "many elements" in the North Vietnamese Four Point statement of April 8 "which appear to be acceptable" and others which were not acceptable, but that the Four Points, together with the four points of the South Vietnamese (June 22), were "worthy of our attention and suitable subjects for discussion." The cable added that, as in the case of contacts with the NLF, such an operation could, if discovered by the South Vietnamese, create suspicion and unease, despite the fact that the U.S. had openly said that it was prepared to negotiate. Therefore, if such a contact were established, the South Vietnamese should be informed.

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[151] This ruse did not succeed. On July 13, 1965, it was reported in the *Washington Post:* "Publicly, Harriman's position is that he is on a European holiday. . . . But this is designed to avoid embarrassment to the Soviet Union and to facilitate his talks with Kremlin leaders."

[152] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Washington to Saigon 41 and 42, July 3, 1965.

[153] The July 3 cable went on to discuss individuals who might be approached—based on a memorandum to William Bundy from Helms of the CIA on July 2, after Bundy had inquired in a memorandum to Helms on July 1 about possible use of cut-outs for such a purpose—but this section of the cable has been excised and the Bundy-Helms memoranda are still classified. Also classified is a memorandum by William Bundy on July 7, 1965 summarizing the conclusions reached at a meeting of his State-CIA working group concerning the establishment of covert diplomatic contacts.

On July 5, Taylor replied to the cables, saying that he and U. Alexis Johnson were "vigorously opposed" to the proposed contacts with the NLF and the North Vietnamese because,[154]

> (1) they are premature now or in any short term future; (2) they are highly dangerous because of the effect on the GVN of a leak, either fortuitous or deliberate on the part of Communists; and (3) by our overeagerness to negotiate, they will nullify our past and present efforts to convince the VC/DRV that we have the will and determination to turn the tide against them sooner or later—so that they had better come to terms sooner rather than later.

"We are convinced," the cable said, "that we are on a sound course now and should stay on it without letting ourselves be diverted to untimely actions on either the political or the military front." It would be more timely after the end of the monsoon season, during which the U.S. would seek to convince the Communists that they could not win, such an operation.

In a memorandum to the President on July 7 accompanying the State Department cables to Saigon and Taylor's reply, McGeorge Bundy noted that Lodge shared Taylor's opinion.[155]

That day (July 7), William Bundy's working group met to consider the proposed contacts with the North Vietnamese and the NLF by U.S. officials, and the general conclusion was that this was not a promising route to take.[156] Instead, Bundy's group proposed that a private U.S. citizen be used to contact Mai Van Bo, and, as will be seen, this was done in early August 1965.

With respect to U.S. discussions with the Russians, which was also approved at the White House meeting on July 2, Harriman spent July 12-22 in Moscow conferring with various officials, including two meetings with Premier Kosygin. He reported to the press that while the Russians wanted peace in Vietnam, they were not willing to mediate the conflict.[157] According to William Bundy, Harriman's mission achieved ". . . rather more success than had been anticipated. Disdaining any direct Soviet role, Kosygin nevertheless conveyed the impression that Hanoi might be open to exploratory discussions, even on its cherished four-point program. It seemed a lead."[158]

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[154] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 41, July 5, 1965.

[155] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

[156] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers), memorandum by William Bundy on the meeting.

[157] *New York Times*, Aug. 4, 1965. The objectives of the discussions, according to a briefing paper prepared for Harriman's use (which included "Talking Points") were: "(1) To convince Soviets we have commitment we intend to honor; (2) To show that we desire a reasonable settlement consistent with that commitment; (3) To get any Soviet ideas on how to proceed." Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, attachment to McGeorge Bundy memorandum to the President July 1, 1965.

During this same period, Senator Fulbright discussed Vietnam with Ambassador Dobrynin. In preparation for a luncheon the two men were having on June 28, Carl Marcy, chief of staff of the Foreign Relations Committee, sent Fulbright a memorandum in which he said, "What is needed at the moment is to get some kind of talks or discussions started. We need a forum other than the passion rousing press." He suggested two ways for opening talks: first, with the cooperation of the U.S.S.R., to get the Security Council to pass a resolution inviting all participants in the 1954 Geneva Conference to meet under the chairmanship of the U.N. Secretary General to discuss a cease-fire and peaceful settlement of the dispute, or, second, to begin private negotiations with the North Vietnamese or the National Liberation Front for an exchange of prisoners, with the hope that they could be broadened into a general discussion of the problem.[159]

Advice of the Wise Men; Opinion of the Public

It had also been decided at the White House meeting on July 2 that in preparing for action on Westmoreland's request it would be useful to get the advice and support of the "Wise Men" ("President's Consultants on Foreign Affairs"), the group of 16 prominent American leaders which had been established on September 9, 1964 in conjunction with the Presidential election campaign.[160] Its members were: Dean Acheson, Eugene R. Black, Omar N. Bradley, John Cowles, Arthur H. Dean, Allen W. Dulles, Roswell L. Gilpatric, Paul G. Hoffman, George B. Kistiakowsky, Arthur Larson, Morris I. Leibman, Robert A. Lovett, John J. McCloy, Teodoro Moscoso, James Perkins, and James J. Wadsworth.

At the President's invitation, the Wise Men met in Washington on July 8-9, 1965.[161] There were several panels for consideration of specific foreign policy issues. The Vietnam Panel, consisting of Bradley, Gilpatric, Kistiakowsky, Larson, and McCloy, met on July 8 with Rusk, McNamara, Llewelyn Thompson and William Bundy, and this is a portion of William Bundy's summary of its conclusions:[162]

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[158] Bundy MS., ch. 31, p. 23.

[159] National Archives, RG 46, Marcy Chron File, memorandum from Marcy to Fulbright, June 25, 1965. There is no known record of the Fulbright-Dobrynin conversation.

[160] See pt. II of this study, p. 359, and Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 644. The group was also called the Advisory Panel on Foreign Affairs.

[161] Background papers for the meetings of the Wise Men on July 8-9, 1965 are in the U.S. Department of State, Lot File 66 D 150, Box 172.

[162] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces. Isaacson and Thomas (pp. 650-651) describe the feelings of McCloy and Lovett:

"McCloy had deep qualms about the war. He spoke at length about how 'impressed' he was with the 'toughness of the situation.' He doubted that merely 'blunting the monsoon offensive' would bring Hanoi into a 'negotiating mood.' He predicted that the situation would remain 'critical' for a long time. Yet after carefully laying out his doubts, he proclaimed that there was really no choice. America's credibility depended on her meeting her obligations and honoring her commitments. To Rusk and McNamara, he was adamant: 'You've got to do it,' he said. 'You've got to go in.'

Continued

The group, with the possible exception of Mr. Larson, felt that the stakes were very high indeed. They concurred in the Administration judgment that Thailand could not be held if South Vietnam were taken over, and they thought that the effects in Japan and India could be most serious. They particularly felt that the effect in Europe might also be most serious, and that de Gaulle would find many takers for his argument that the US could not now be counted on to defend Europe.

They also felt that South Vietnam was a crucial test of the ability of the free world and of the US to counter the Communist tactic of "wars of national liberation," and that a US defeat would necessarily lead to world wide questioning whether US commitments could be relied on.

It was the feeling of the group that these consequences would be accentuated if the US by its own decision withdrew from South Vietnam, or if the US suffered a military defeat there. On the other hand, the group felt that the consequences would not be much reduced if a Communist takeover took place as a result of a change in government in Saigon, as a result of which the US was asked to leave.

Mr. Larson appeared to dissent from this assessment, in line with his over-all view that we should be seeking UN action or serious negotiations. . . .

In line with their view of the grave stakes, the group generally felt that there should be no question of making whatever combat force increases were required. Several members of the group thought that our actions to date had perhaps been too restrained, and had been misconstrued by Hanoi that we were less than wholly determined.

The group urged that, in connection with any decisions for further increases, there should be a full spelling out of the military situation and the facts making the increases necessary. . . .

As to going to the UN, it should be noted that several members of the group, while clearly opposing Mr. Larson's line, thought that it might be useful at some time—perhaps in the context of increased military commitments—to do this, in order to make clear again that we were ready for negotiations. But the general feeling was that such a move at the present time would not be useful and would be a dangerous sign of weakness. (General Bradley particularly stressed this point.)

"Bob Lovett's doubts about the war were, if anything, greater than McCloy's. As he slouched uncomfortably in a Queen Anne chair, he frankly told McNamara and Rusk that he suspected that the government was painting too rosy a picture of the situation.

"Years later, Lovett would remark that 'getting into Vietnam was one of the stupidest things we ever did. We didn't know what the hell we were doing there.' Yet like McCloy, he believed that once committed, the U.S. had to stick it out. He also recalled from his days of trying to bomb Japan and Germany into submission that no force should be spared. Once engaged in Vietnam, he held, the U.S. had to go in all the way.

"Thus his ultimate conclusion was no different from McCloy's: the U.S. must send in ground troops, and enough to do the job. He cautioned only that it was not useful to speak in terms of 'victory.' What was really involved was preventing the expansion of Communism by force; in a sense, avoiding defeat."

In a letter to McGeorge Bundy on July 9, Gilpatric added this comment in his summary of the consensus of opinion among the members of the Vietnam Panel:[163]

> To prepare the American people for this changed role and larger effort, Government spokesmen from the President on down must speak out fully and frankly. To keep the measure of popular support which the Administration policy and program for Vietnam now enjoy, there must not only be acknowledgement of how the situation has worsened but why other sources of action being urged upon the Government—by such as Lippmann, Laird and Ford, as well as by Gruening, Morse et al.—are not acceptable.

On the evening of July 8, from 6:34 p.m. to 8:45 p.m. President Johnson met with Rusk, Ball, McNamara, Secretary of the Treasury Fowler, McGeorge Bundy and selected members of the advisory group: Acheson, General Bradley, Cowles, Dean, Lovett and McCloy. There apparently are no notes of that meeting, but Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas[164] give this description, based on a letter from Acheson to former President Truman (with whom he had served as Secretary of State):

> At the end of the day, Johnson asked to hear from a few of the Wise Men directly. He chose a small group that included Lovett, McCloy, and Acheson to come to the White House for a drink and a chat at six-thirty that evening. Fortified with a cocktail, the elder statesmen were arrayed around the long mahogany table in the Cabinet Room to hear out the President's dilemma firsthand and to impart their wisdom.
>
> Johnson came in, shook hands, and immediately launched off on a long tirade about the war. The effect on Acheson was not to make him share his own doubts about Vietnam,[165] but to provoke him to tell the President to stop whining. Acheson described his reaction—and that of his colleagues—in a letter to Harry Truman.
>
> "We were all disturbed by a long complaint about how mean everything and everybody was to him—Fate, the Press, the Congress, the Intellectuals and so on. For a long time he fought the problem of Vietnam (every course of action was wrong; he had no support from anyone at home or abroad; it interfered with all his programs, etc., etc.). . . . I got to thinking about you and General Marshall and how we never wasted time 'fighting the problem' or endlessly reconsidering decisions, or feeling sorry for ourselves."
>
> Acheson fidgeted impatiently as he listened to Johnson wallow in self-pity. Finally, he could stand it no longer. "I blew my top and told him he was wholly right on Vietnam," Acheson wrote HST, "that he had no choice except to press on, that explanations were not as important as successful action."
>
> Acheson's scolding emboldened the others. "With this lead my colleagues came thundering in like the charge of the Scots

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[163] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[164] Isaacson and Thomas, pp. 651-652.

[165] Acheson had apparently been desirous of avoiding further U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, and, it will be recalled, had joined Ball in proposing a plan for "social and political reconstruction" of South Vietnam. See p. 260 above.

> Greys at Waterloo," Acheson exulted to the former President. "They were fine; old Bob Lovett, usually cautious, was all out. . . . I think . . . we scored," he concluded.

In a plenary session of all of the Wise Men the following day (July 9), Robert Lovett said that "it was not useful to talk about victory, that what was really involved was preventing the expansion of Communism by force; in a sense, avoiding defeat." "This view seemed to be generally shared," William Bundy said in his summary of the meeting.[166]

In an interview several years later, George Ball, noting that he had presented the group with his dissenting views and "made no impression," said: "After the meeting I went over to Acheson, and I think Arthur Dean and somebody else was standing there, and I said, 'You goddamned old bastards. You remind me of nothing so much as a bunch of buzzards sitting on a fence and letting the young men die. You don't know a goddamned thing about what you're talking about.' "[167]

William Bundy feels that under the circumstances the advisory group did not have the time or the information to form a "worthwhile judgment":[168]

> In July 1965 there was no searching examination, no built-in familiarity with the picture, no broad contact with an aroused public opinion. Lacking these elements, the men who met with the President on July 8th were bound to give him and his advisors every benefit of acceptance, and to throw their weight in terms overwhelmingly of their own personal experience and very little in terms of a really hard look at the difficulties of the particular case. It was a poor way to proceed, and will always be on any serious and complicated question.

On the subject of public and congressional support, on June 30 McGeorge Bundy sent the President a memorandum (drafted by Chester Cooper) which concluded:[169]

> In general, the public appears unenthusiastic but reconciled to our role in this conflict. While there is widespread questioning and uneasiness about the way in which we may be playing that role, the public as a whole seems to realize that the role must be played. Furthermore, open skepticism as to our tactics subsides at times of sharp crisis in the situation.
>
> The most *articulate critics* of our present policy in Vietnam have been elements within the academic community and church organizations. Although usually a minority within their own groups, they have stimulated extensive worry and inquiry in the nation as a whole. With the end of the academic year, this protest movement has temporarily subsided. (emphasis in original)

The memorandum added that there was also general support from the press. The same was true of Congress, despite some criticism:

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[166] William Bundy's summary, cited above.

[167] Johnson Library, George Ball Oral History, Interview II (1971).

[168] Bundy MS., ch. 27, p. 20.

[169] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, McGeorge Bundy Memorandum to the President, June 30, 1965, "France in Vietnam, 1954, and the U.S. in Vietnam, 1965—a Useful Analogy?" cited above.

> The most vocal current comment on the Vietnam situation is coming from the *Congress.* Senators Morse and Gruening remain convinced that we must pull out. There is another group, somewhat larger, which could be termed *"reluctant realists"* whose viscera says get out but whose heads tell them the present policy is unavoidable. Senators Mansfield, Church and Fulbright seem to fall in this category. Once again, the problem is one of offering a plausible alternative that would assure the existence of a non-Communist South Vietnam.
>
> The most recent Congressional development is the attack spearheaded by Representative Melvin Laird who states that unless we go for *total victory* we shouldn't commit U.S. ground troops. He threatens withdrawal of Republican support in the House. It is too early to judge the appeal of this maneuver.
>
> Despite obvious Congressional disquiet, Congressional support has been demonstrated in the 512-2 vote last August on the Southeast Asia Resolution and in the votes approving the President's request for a supplemental Vietnam appropriation (408-7 and 88-3). (emphases in original) [170]

Two polls were cited in support of the conclusions drawn in the memorandum. The first was the Harris Survey of June 28, 1965, which found that, "On the surface, at least, President Johnson has strong support for the course he has charted in Vietnam." [171] Harris also concluded, however, that, "Simmering below the surface are misgivings and confusion about the implications of American policy."

These were the questions and answers in the June 28 Harris Survey:

> *"It is argued that if we don't stand fast in Vietnam, the Communists will move in to take over the rest of Southeast Asia. Do you tend to agree or disagree with this point of view?"* [172]

	Percent
Agree	9
Disagree	5
Not sure	16

> *"How would you rate the job President Johnson has been doing in handling the war in Vietnam—excellent, pretty good, only fair, or poor?"*

	Percent
Excellent	18
Pretty good	44
Only fair	25
Poor	8
Not sure	5

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[170] On July 13, 1965, the State Department sent an airgram (CA-412) to all of its diplomatic and consular posts, "Public and Congressional Support for US Vietnam Policy," in which it made similar points. The airgram included the breakdown of responses to questions asked in the June 28 Harris survey (see following paragraph in text), saying that they ". . . should be useful in helping to show that the recent widely publicized 'teach-in' and 'demonstrations' opposing US policy in Vietnam are merely the work of a vocal minority." U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S.

[171] *Washington Post,* June 28, 1965.

[172] For comparisons with a similar question asked in February 1965, in which the same percentage of respondents (78 percent) indicated agreement, see p. 73 above.

"(As you know) President Johnson has ordered continued bombings of North Vietnam in retaliation for Communist raids in South Vietnam. Do you favor the continued bombings in North Vietnam or are you opposed to them?" [173]

	Percent
Favor	59
Oppose	18
Not sure	23

"This summer, during the rainy season in Vietnam, the Communists have said they will mount a land offensive to drive the Americans out of South Vietnam. Do you favor the U.S. sending in more troops to defend South Vietnam this summer, or do you think we should just keep the men we have there, or do you feel we should take out most of the troops we have there?" [174]

	Percent
Send more	47
Just keep troops there	19
Take out most	11
Not sure	23

"All in all, what do you think we should do about Vietnam now? We can follow one of three courses: Carry the ground war into North Vietnam, at the risk of bringing Red China into the fighting; negotiate a settlement with the Communists; or continue to try to hold the line there to prevent the Communists from taking over South Vietnam. Which do you favor?" [175]

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[173] In February, 83 percent of respondents in a Harris survey had favored retaliatory bombing. See p. 73 above.

[174] Responses to this question by Harris were broken down as follows:

[In percent]

	Send More	*Keep Troops There*	*Take Out*	*Not Sure*
GOP	48	20	9	23
Democrats	47	19	11	23
Independents	48	20	13	19
GOP for LBJ	46	25	6	23
East	43	26	12	19
Midwest	45	20	9	26
South	49	12	7	32
West	54	15	1	16
Cities	48	21	11	20
Suburbs	51	20	12	17
Towns	45	22	10	23
Rural	43	15	9	33

[175] Responses to this question were broken down regionally as follows:

[Percent]

	Carry War North	*Negotiate*	*Hold line*	*Not sure*
East	19	26	35	20
Midwest	16	25	41	18
South	21	18	38	23
West	20	27	36	17

[Percent]

	June 28, 1965	*Feb. 22, 1965*	*Jan. 1965*	*Nov. 1964*
Carry war north	20	12	17	20
Negotiate	24	35	23	20
Hold line	36	46	40	40
Not sure	20	7	20	20

"President Johnson has called for unconditional negotiations in Vietnam. This means the U.S. would sit down right now with the Communists to try to work out a peace in South Vietnam. But he has also said that we would not agree to a settlement in Vietnam unless the Communists end their guerrilla warfare in South Vietnam. Do you tend to agree with President Johnson or disagree with his stand in Vietnam?"

	Percent
Agree	73
Disagree	9
Not sure	18

"It is argued that the United States is trying to control Southeast Asia mainly with military power, while the people there want mainly to set up their own national governments. Therefore, it is argued, we will get ourselves involved in a land war in Asia with our own troops that we might never be able to win. Do you agree or disagree with this view?"

	Percent
Agree	32
Disagree	35
Not sure	33

The second poll cited in the memorandum was the Gallup Poll of June 9, 1965: [176]

"In your opinion, what would you like to see the United States do next about Vietnam?"

	Percent
Withdraw completely	12
Start negotiations, stop fighting	16
Continue present policy	20
Step up present efforts	4
Go all-out, declare war	17
No opinion, other responses	33

On July 2, 1965, Gallup released the results of an identical poll:

"In your opinion, what would you like to see the United States do next about Vietnam?"

[Percent]

	July 2, 1965	*June 9, 1965*	*May 16, 1965*	*April 23, 1965*
Withdraw completely	13	12	13	17
Start negotiating, stop fighting	11	16	12	12
Continue present policy	16	20	13	14
Step-up present efforts	6	4	8	12
Go all-out, declare war	17	17	15	19
Other or no opinion	37	33	39	33

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[176] Gallup, *The Gallup Poll,* vol. 3, p. 1943. The table adds up to more than 100 percent; some persons gave more than one answer.

There is some question as to whether these two polls—the Gallup Poll of June 9 and the Harris Survey of June 28—support the conclusion in McGeorge Bundy's (Cooper's) memorandum of June 30 that the public, while "unenthusiastic," was "reconciled" to the U.S. role in the war, and "seems to realize that the role must be played." In the Gallup Poll of June 9, only 20 percent favored a continuation of present policy (16 percent in the July 2 Gallup Poll), and only 4 percent (6 percent on July 2) favored an increase in present efforts, while 28 percent in the June 9 Poll favored negotiations and disengagement (24 percent in the July 2 Poll) and 17 percent in the June 9 Poll (the same on July 2) favored all-out war. Moreover, the high percentage of "other" or no opinion (33 percent on June 9 and 37 percent on July 2) is a further indication of the lack of public knowledge and/or support for U.S. policy.

Likewise, in the Harris Survey of June 28, while respondents agreed strongly with the argument that the Communists would take over Southeast Asia if the U.S. did not stand fast in South Vietnam, there continued to be a sharp division of opinion with respect to what the U.S. should do (which had changed little since the question was asked in November of 1964), as well as whether the war could be won if more U.S. forces were used.

Military Planning for the Deployment of U.S. Forces

During June and the first part of July 1965, while the President and his advisers were considering Westmoreland's request for additional troops, U.S. military leaders were continuing to provide explanations and justifications for the need for more troops as well as to develop plans for how they would be used. On June 23, General Wheeler told Admiral Sharp (CINCPAC) and General Westmoreland that in connection with the discussions taking place in Washington he needed their personal views on the question, "What additional military actions can we take in South Vietnam and in the DRV, short of destroying North Vietnamese economic and population targets, which will apply additional pressures on the VC and on the DRV?" [177] There was some thought in Washington, he said, that the deployment of more than 100,000 U.S. troops would create an adverse reaction from the South Vietnamese similar to that faced by the French.

In his reply on June 24, Westmoreland began by saying:[178]

> By way of introduction, the premise behind whatever further actions we may undertake, either in SVN or DRV, must be that we are in for the long pull. The struggle has become a war of attrition. Short of decision to introduce nuclear weapons against sources and channels of enemy power, I see no likelihood of achieving a quick, favorable end to the war. The fabric of GVN civil functions and services has been rendered so ineffective and listless by successive coups and changes, and the military arm is in such need of revitalization that we can come to no other conclusion.

There was, Westmoreland said, ". . . absolutely no logical reason to conclude that we will be cast in the role of the French. It's up to the US leadership in SVN to insure that we do not fall into such a role, by means of indoctrination, discipline, morale, positioning the masses of US combat forces away from population centers and administrative controls, all of which we now stress."

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[177] CMH, Westmoreland Papers, COMUSMACV Message File, JCS 2331-65, June 23, 1965.
[178] Same location, MAC 3240, June 24, 1965.

In addition to the forces which he had requested on June 7 (the 44 battalion request), Westmoreland said that other forces would be required "sooner or later," adding: ". . . [I] believe it is time all concerned face up to fact that we must be prepared for a long war which will probably involve increasing numbers of US troops. If the Communists have the determination to make it such, they certainly have the capabilities and we have no choice but to match them, with an increment left over in our favor."

Westmoreland said there were several actions that the U.S. could take to exert pressure on the North Vietnamese without running an "unacceptable risk" of Chinese involvement. These were:

1. To use B-52s on military targets removed from civilian areas.
2. To interdict the railroad from North Vietnam to China.
3. To mine the harbor at Haiphong.
4. To continue interdiction of lines of communication in North Vietnam.

Westmoreland concluded by stressing the need for at least limited U.S. mobilization:

> It is difficult, if not impossible for me to imagine how we can commit and sustain US forces, air, warfare and naval, without backing them up for the long pull by mobilization of manpower, industrial and training resources at least to a limited degree. I face the very practical problem of maintaining morale of people on their second combat tours, with many, many more to come, I suspect, when all the forces we require are committed. I understand almost the entire complement of aviators in the 1st Cav will be on their 2d tour by the time it gets here, while the average US citizen enjoys his butter at no inconvenience.

He also stressed the need for informing the public about U.S. policy:

> It would seem that we should prepare US and world opinion for the rigors ahead by airing an objective, complete analysis of the problem we face and what we must do about it. The news couldn't be worse overall than it is now made out to be in piece-meal fashion by irresponsible or uninformed reporting and editorializing today. This could well be the most salutary thing we might do. The government would then be in a position to counterattack, in good faith, the distorted reporting of the crepe hangers.

On the same day as Westmoreland's cable (June 24), Wheeler sent another cable to Sharp (CINCPAC) and Westmoreland asking for additional data on the need for U.S. forces, saying that consideration was being given to transferring from the South Vietnamese to the Americans the primary responsibility for providing all strategic (mobile) Reserves, for security in the Saigon area, defense of the DMZ, and security of major military installations.[179] Also under consideration was a proposal for deploying up to 100 U.S. combat support companies of about 150 men each (armor, artillery, mechanized infantry, helicopters) in key district towns to reinforce local security.

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[179] Same location, JCS 2360-65, June 24, 1965.

Westmoreland's reaction was that the U.S. should not change its policy of supporting ~~the~~ South Vietnamese Armed Forces. "In my opinion," he told Wheeler in a cable on June 26, "it is important that we stick with the principle that it is a Vietnamese war; that the Vietnamese fight it; and that they are the only ones that can win it. This means that we must not usurp their basic prerogatives as a nation. . . ."[180] U.S. forces, he said, should not be committed to defend along the DMZ, but could back up South Vietnamese forces performing that role. Nor should U.S. forces be used to defend military installations. As for the strategic Reserves, he said he envisioned a mobile force of South Vietnamese and U.S. forces. With respect to combat support units, he said that U.S. artillery and engineer units could be used to support South Vietnamese forces, but that to do so with armor or mechanized infantry would create problems of command relationships and of logistical support and would fragment U.S. combat strength. "I again underline my conviction," Westmoreland said, "that the main contribution that could be made by US ground forces, in addition to serving vital US bases, is to take the fight to the main VC and PAVN forces by reacting sharply to VC initiatives and/or by offensive operations into base areas."

He concluded: "It seems that every several months we spin our wheels exploring novel ideas on how to deal with this conflict. We are deluding ourselves if we feel some novel arrangement is going to get quick results. We must think in terms of an extended conflict; be prepared to support a greatly increased effort; give the commander on the scene the troops that he requires and the authority to deploy those troops in accordance with his best judgment."

On June 29, after Wheeler and Sharp (who was in Washington) met with McNamara, Wheeler, apparently in response to McNamara, sent Westmoreland a cable asking whether 44 battalions would be adequate to accomplish U.S. objectives.[181] "Our objective in South Vietnam," Wheeler said, "is to prove to the VC/DRV that they cannot win in South Vietnam. To do this we propose to increase US/GVN military strength to the level required to counter current and likely VC ground strength. In North Vietnam our objective is further to curtail by airstrikes their capability and will to continue support to the VC." If all 44 battalions were deployed, he asked, would this give the U.S. "reasonable assurance" of achieving those objectives, "assuming the VC strength continues to be of the magnitude of your present estimates? Obviously, if the VC sizeably augment their forces the situation will be changed."

Westmoreland replied on June 30 that, on the assumption that the Communists did not modify their objectives, the answer to the question was "No."[182] The 44 battalion force, he said, ". . . will not provide reasonable assurance of attaining the objective you postulate (convincing the DRV/VC they cannot win). The DRV/VC are too deeply committed to be influenced by anything but application of overpowering force. Consequently, while infusion of US/3d country combat strength of the scope contemplated should reestablish the military balance by the end of December, it will not per se cause the enemy to back off."

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[180] Same location, MAC 3275, June 26, 1965.
[181] Same location, JCS 2400-65, June 29, 1965.
[182] Same location, MAC 3320, June 30, 1965.

Westmoreland concluded that it was not possible at that time to state what additional forces would be needed in 1966 "to gain and maintain the military initiative"—he hoped to be able to make such an estimate in August—but, "instinctively, we believe that there may be substantial additional US force requirements." He added that the need for limited mobilization "seems clear and pressing," and that the impact on North Vietnam and China of such a move might be greater than the deployment of an entire Army Corps (which usually consists of three divisions—upwards of 100,000 troops including support forces).

The next day (June 30), in response to a cable from Sharp asking the same question,[183] Westmoreland, referring to his cable to Wheeler on this subject, replied to Sharp that same day: "We cannot now give Secdef the definitive answer he seeks. There are simply too many unknowns at this juncture."[184]

In a cable to Wheeler on July 4, Sharp agreed that the matter required further study.[185] He added: "Based on intelligence indicators and an increasing VC/DRV threat and capabilities, it is possible that currently planned deployments may not achieve the favorable balance we need to convince the enemy that he cannot win. Therefore to be sure we can get on the right side of the power curve quickly, steps should be taken now to ready additional forces for expeditious deployment. As a minimum, I recommend that action be initiated now to ready an additional army division force tailored for employment in Southeast Asia."

In addition to these exchanges between Wheeler, Westmoreland and Sharp concerning the need for and role of additional U.S. troops, plans were being made for the use of those forces. In his 44-battalion request on June 7, Westmoreland proposed that the 1st Air Cavalry Division be deployed to Pleiku and Kontum in the central highlands, contrary to the earlier concept (with which the Army had never agreed) that U.S. forces would be deployed to coastal enclaves.[186] Admiral Sharp (CINCPAC) disagreed, arguing that the coastal areas had the heaviest population, grew most of the rice and contained the principal north-south lines of communication. If these areas were made secure, the Communists would be limited to mountain areas with few people and little food. As Sharp said in a cable to Wheeler on June 11, "Control of areas in the coastal plain and in the Mekong delta will mean controlling the insurgency in key areas of South Vietnam. Control of the sparsely populated highland and mountain areas inland is a less decisive, albeit complementary supporting action which should be undertaken subsequently if all of South Vietnam is to be under a friendly government eventually." [187] There were not enough U.S. forces, Sharp added, to establish control in both coastal and inland areas, and he recommended, therefore, that the 1st Air Cavalry Division be deployed on the coast at Qui Nhon, and that it should pacify that area before being sent inland.

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[183] Same location, History Backup File, CINCPAC 300100Z June 1965, from Sharp to Westmoreland.

[184] Same location, Message File, MAC 3331, June 30, 1965.

[185] Same location, CINCPAC 040623Z July 1965, from Sharp to Wheeler.

[186] See the JCS paper of April 17 and Westmoreland's of May 8, pp. 230 and 235 above.

Westmoreland responded on June 13 that although the insurgency had to be defeated in populated areas, this could best be done by South Vietnamese troops while U.S. forces conducted search and destroy operations against Communist main force units, especially in the area around Pleiku and Kontum, as well as defending major population centers in the highlands and guarding against possible infiltration into the south by North Vietnamese military units.[188] He proposed using Route 19, which runs in an east-west direction from Qui Nhon through Pleiku, as a "magnet" to draw the Communists into battle, and he was confident that, with the air mobile division and tactical airpower, such a battle, on terrain "as good as any and better than most," and "vastly preferable to the populated lowlands," could be won.

In the end, Westmoreland prevailed, and the 1st Air Cavalry Division was sent to the highlands.

Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Harold Johnson, disagreed with both Admiral Sharp and Westmoreland. He was opposed to the deployment of large numbers of U.S. forces to coastal enclaves[189] or the use of U.S. forces in search and destroy operations in the central highlands or as reserve forces against North Vietnamese troops which might come across the border. On June 24, 1965, General Westmoreland submitted to CINCPAC the draft of a proposed paper, "Concept of Military Operations in the Republic of Vietnam," in preparation for the deployment of U.S. forces.[190] On July 7, General Johnson returned the draft for revision, saying, among other things, that the proposed plan of operations focused ". . . too much on the conventional and not enough on the unconventional and related aspects of the conflict. Specifically, there is far too much flavor of an OPLAN 32-64 analysis [191] of how to cope with major formations coming down from the north, rather than looking carefully at the condition that actually exists and trying to evolve a concept that copes with existing conditions." "There has to be a solution to our problem," General Johnson said, "[but] we have not yet found it." [192]

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[187] CMH, CINCPAC to JCS, 112210Z, June 1965, "Concept of Counterinsurgency Operations in South Vietnam."

[188] CMH, COMUSMACV to CINCPAC, 131515Z, June 1965, "Concept of Operations—Force Requirements and Deployments, SVN."

[189] On June 12, General Johnson, in a memorandum to his deputy chief of staff for operations (DCSOPS), took the position that it would not be effective to base U.S. forces in population centers on the coast. ". . . the major population areas," he said, "can be likened to a gigantic sponge that could absorb up to a half million troops without providing adequate security against sabotage and terrorism, continue a small but steady casualty rate among U.S. troops, not avoid periodic ambushes against both ARVN and U.S. troop formations, and generally be inconclusive and indecisive." National Archives, RG 319, Memorandum from the Chief of Staff to DCSOPS, "Commander's Estimate," June 12, 1965.

[190] Same location.

[191] OPLAN 32-64 was the update of a SEATO contingency plan from the 1950s which provided for a response by SEATO forces, led by the U.S., to potential threats to South Vietnam, including an invasion by North Vietnam, possibly supported by the People's Republic of China.

The Goodpaster Report: Can We Win?

After he was unable on June 29 to get Westmoreland to give assurances that the 44 battalions would be adequate to "convince the VC that they cannot win," McNamara turned to the JCS, and on July 2 he asked General Wheeler to prepare immediately a military assessment of "the assurance the U.S. can have of winning in South Vietnam 'if we do everything we can.' " [193]

General Wheeler directed General Goodpaster to conduct the study with an "Ad Hoc Study Group" group consisting of representatives from the Office of the Chairman (Wheeler), the Chairman's Special Studies Group, the Defense Intelligence Agency, J-3 (operations), and the Joint War Games Agency.

Later that day (July 2), McNaughton sent a memorandum to Goodpaster, "Subject: Forces Required to Win in South Vietnam," suggesting questions for the Ad Hoc Study Group to consider.[194] First, McNaughton said, "the study should produce a clear articulation of what our strategy is for winning the war in South Vietnam, tough as that articulation will be in view of the nature of the problem." In doing so, McNaughton said, the group should assume that after sending the 44 battalions to Vietnam during 1965, there would be additional forces deployed in 1966 "as required and as our capabilities permit."

A key question, McNaughton added, was what was meant by "winning":

> With respect to the word "win," this I think means that we succeed in demonstrating to the VC that they cannot win; this, of course, is victory for us only if it is, with a high degree of probability, a way station toward a favorable settlement in South Vietnam. I see such a favorable settlement as one in which the VC terrorism is substantially eliminated and, obviously, there are no longer largescale VC attacks; the central South Vietnamese government (without having taken in the Communists) should be exercising fairly complete sovereignty over most of South Vietnam. I presume that we would rule out the ceding of the VC (either tacitly or explicitly) of large areas of the country. More specifically, the Brigadier Thompson [Brigadier W. F. K. Thompson, military correspondent of the British newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph*] suggestion that we withdraw to enclaves and sit it out for a couple of years is not what we have in mind for purposes of this study.

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[192] National Archives, RG 319, Memorandum from the Chief of Staff to DCSOPS, "Commander's Estimate," July 7, 1965.

The final, revised MACV paper, "Concept of Operations in the Republic of Vietnam," was issued in late August 1965. See pt. IV of this study, forthcoming. Meanwhile, during July, Westmoreland's staff produced a paper on "Tactical Employment of US Ground Combat Forces," a copy of which is at CMH.

[193] The quotation is from Wheeler's oral directive to Goodpaster on July 2, 1965, as stated in the report on July 14 of the Ad Hoc Study Group, "Intensification of the Military Operations in Vietnam, Concept and Appraisal," p. i, Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam (hereafter referred to as the Goodpaster Report).

[194] The text of McNaughton's memorandum is in *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. IV, pp. 291-293.

How long would it take to "win"? This, too, should be addressed, McNaughton said.

How would political conditions in South Vietnam affect the war? "My own thought," McNaughton said, "is that almost anything within the realm of likelihood can happen in the Saigon government, short of the formation of a government which goes neutral or asks us out, without appreciably affecting the conduct of the war. The key point may be whether the Army rather than the government holds together."

In an interview some years later, Goodpaster was asked whether he viewed the memorandum from McNaughton as guidance for the study.[195] He replied, "No, not at all. . . . I regarded it as an interesting statement of views by John McNaughton but not a guidance in any sense . . . we regarded that with a little bit of humor. . . . There was a little bit of presumption, I think, that he would be in position to give us guidance . . . he was not in a position of authority. . . . The people who had authority over us were the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary . . . and the power to give us guidance was the Secretary's."

The 128-page report of the Ad Hoc Study Group, which was completed on July 14, 1965, the day McNamara left for Saigon pursuant to the President's decision on July 2, concluded that the response to the question, "Can we win if we do everything we can?" was a "*conditional* affirmative": "*Within the bounds of reasonable assumptions (particularly as to actions and/or capabilities of the Chinese, the Russians and the North Vietnamese on the hostile side, and the South Vietnamese on our side) there appears to be no reason we cannot win if such is our will—and if that will is manifested in strategy and tactical operations.*"[196]

There were some uncertainties, the report said:[197]

> Assessment of the assurance the US can have of winning in SVN if we do "everything we can" must remain to a degree tentative for many reasons, including in particular the limited experience in SVN to date with offensive operations approximating the kind envisaged herein. The present assessment utilizes rough techniques of estimation, subject to refinement when added experience data are available and further analysis of the problem in specific terms is conducted. In addition, there are uncertainties including the effectiveness of DRV efforts to overcome bomb damage, especially to lines of communication, and as to DRV decision regarding the introduction of further major combat elements into SVN in addition to those of the 325th Division now there.

The report added, however, that these uncertainties did not invalidate the conclusion:[198]

> While there are important uncertainties and unknowns, there is little probability that they could invalidate this judgment, [that the U.S. could win] *providing the assumptions hold true.* The key question appears to resolve itself into a matter of

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[195] CRS Interview with Andrew Goodpaster, Oct. 1, 1986.

[196] Goodpaster Report, p. ii.

[197] *Ibid.*, p. J-1. Emphases in quotations from the report are in the original.

[198] *Ibid.*, p. ii.

> means and willingness to use the means. Neither the means visualized, nor the use of those means, appears to go beyond the bounds of reason, realism or prudence.

This was the Goodpaster group's definition of "winning":

> "Winning" . . . involves achieving an outcome somewhere between, as a maximum, an end to insurgency by DRV/VC decision and as an acceptable minimum, containment of the insurgency, except for minor areas and minor acts of violence, with an end to the need for the presence of substantial US forces.

The report added that, "Outcomes such as complete loss of the area, further erosion, 'losing slowly,' and 'bogging down' in a series of beleaguered coastal enclaves or in inconclusive jungle combat are judged to represent failing rather than winning in the area, and are rejected."

This was the report's summary of the "basic concept" for winning the war on which U.S. strategy should be based: [199]

> The basic concept should be that allied forces (US, SVN and third country), by aggressive exploitation of superior military force, gain and keep the initiative both in SVN and against NVN, keeping the DRV and VC at a disadvantage, keeping the tempo such as to deny them time to recuperate or regain their balance, progressively destroying the war-supporting power of North Vietnam, and pressing the fight against VC/DRV main force units in SVN to run them to ground and destroy them. The object is to cause them to stop the war, or to render them ineffective if they seek to pursue it. The operations should combine to compel the VC/DRV to fight at a higher and more sustained intensity with resulting greater logistical consumption, and concurrently to attack his LOC [lines of communication] to limit his capability to resupply forces in combat at this scale.

The *"major assumptions"* of the report, within the bounds of which the U.S. could win if the assumptions held true, were summarized as follows: [200]

> a. China and Russia will not intervene with armed forces, overtly or covertly, so long as there is no US/SVN land invasion of NVN.
>
> b. Restrictions on US/SVN use of force do not exceed the following:
>
> (1) No land invasion of NVN by US/SVN forces.
> (2) No use of nuclear weapons or chemical weapons.
> (3) No mass bombing of population per se.
>
> c. Once the concept envisaged in this study is approved by higher authority, operations within the scope of the proposed strategy will not be subject to restriction, delay, or planning uncertainties. This implies that the GVN will cooperate as necessary to this end.
>
> d. Operational coordination between US and SVN forces meets minimum acceptable professional standards of effectiveness.

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[199] *Ibid.*, p. J-2.
[200] *Ibid.*, p. iii.

> e. Neither the government nor the population of SVN turns against the US and demands withdrawal.

Another assumption, which was not included in this summary of "major assumptions," but which was stated subsequently and appears to have been one of the most important assumptions of the study, was that while American forces along with some South Vietnamese and third country forces were conducting offensive military operations against main force units, the South Vietnamese would provide local security against Communist guerrillas.

The report went on to discuss each of the assumptions, and then to discuss the proposed plan of military action and the troop requirements for its execution.[201] It concluded that with the addition of the 44 battalions deployed in I, II, and III Corps (leaving IV Corps [the delta] to the South Vietnamese), the ratio would be 4-1, "a circumstance which should assure us a high probability of destroying his [the enemy's] units engaged." [202]

In an interview some years later, General Goodpaster was asked whether the report was based on an implicit assumption that the war was becoming a more conventional war—General Giap's Phase III [203]—and therefore that the four to one ratio could be considered adequate. Goodpaster replied: [204]

> It was in part becoming a conventional war because we had main force units to deal with, and anyone who thought these were simple peasants in black pajamas who picked up a rifle as part-time duty was quite wrong. These were trained and battle- hardened units equipped with limited but quite effective weapons, both crew-served and individual weapons, and they were very skillful at moving and preparing for attacks, conducting attacks, and then withdrawing before they could be destroyed. So, searching them out with the idea of destroying them was a real challenge.

Generally, the State Department and the CIA disagreed with the military that the war in Vietnam had moved into a "Third Stage" involving more conventional operations and less guerrilla warfare. In a memorandum on June 29, 1965, the CIA stated: [205]

> The past year has also shown a further development of the Viet Cong capability to mount and sustain large-scale military engagements, frequently in reinforced regimental strength. While more intensive than in the past, this larger scale commitment of Viet Cong forces in combat reflects no marked change as yet in the essential guerrilla character of the Viet Cong military effort.

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[201] See Appendix II, below p. 469, for a summary of these sections of the Goodpaster Report.

[202] Goodpaster Report, p. I-24.

[203] Giap's conception of the three phases or stages of revolutionary warfare—passive resistance, active resistance and preparation for the counteroffensive, and general counteroffensive—was based on Mao Tse-tung's three-phase theory of protracted war. In Giap's Phase II, as in Mao's, guerrilla warfare would be predominant, whereas Phase III involved primarily a "war of movement" in which, while continuing to use guerrilla actions, there would be greater emphasis on larger offensive actions involving more conventional forces. Even in the war of movement, however, there would be no fixed fronts or rear areas, and the more conventional pitched battles would be avoided. See George K. Tanham, *Communist Revolutionary Warfare*, rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1967), ch. 1.

[204] CRS Interview with Andrew Goodpaster, Oct. 1, 1986.

[205] U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Central File, "Developments in South Vietnam During the Past Year," SC No. 07353/65, June 29, 1965.

In a memorandum to Rusk on July 23, 1965, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research concluded: [206]

> We do not believe that the criteria established by Giap for the third stage—size of unit, scale of operation, and nature of attack—have been or are about to be met in South Vietnam. Our examination of Viet Cong capabilities . . . persuades us rather that the VC will continue to employ guerrilla tactics with only intermittent recourse to spectacular, multibattalion attacks against major ARVN targets. . . . We cannot see them resorting to a strategy that would substantially increase their vulnerability to US power, except as an act of desperation in which they might take major risks in the hope of bettering their position for immediate negotiating purposes.

In the interview, Goodpaster was asked what consideration the study group had given to what would happen if the Communists avoided more conventional warfare and resorted to using guerrilla tactics against U.S. forces. He replied:

> Well, what happens is that we were to have the forces that could take the initiative against them, and the way you do that is the way that is laid out here [in the report], that by aggressive action and taking the initiative to search them out, you can find, fix, fight and destroy them. And that's the traditional military task in mobile operations.

General Goodpaster was then asked how the study group had arrived at the four to one ratio, and he replied:

> We had a good deal of discussion on that. We had some experience to draw on, and we knew that we needed a preponderance of force, and a preponderance of less than three to one would risk stalemate and we wanted to take that to where we would clearly have the capability of going on the offensive and exerting maximum sustained pressure. If we exerted maximum sustained pressure, we would force them to expend resources, particularly ammunition and individual equipment, and that would impose a heavier logistic burden on them, and that is what our air people could effectively work against. If they were allowed simply to go on on a very low operational level, then it would be very difficult, in fact impossible, for our air force to cut the flow that far.

With respect to the four to one ratio, McNamara in his report on July 20 stated, as justification for supporting Westmoreland's 44 battalion request: "The number of US troop [44 battalions] is too small to make a significant difference in the traditional 10-1 government-guerrilla formula, but it is not too small to make a significant difference in the kind of war which seems to be evolving in Vietnam, a 'Third Stage' or conventional war in which it is easier to identify, locate and attack the enemy." [207]

The question of the troop ratio needed to achieve U.S. objectives was raised by Members of Congress at various points prior to the July 1965 decision on troops. In each case, the administration's answer was that a 4:1 ratio was adequate. "Force multipliers" resulting from U.S. technical superiority, especially the mobility afforded by helicopters, were said to have brought about a change in the ratio. Thus, when the House Democratic whip, Hale Boggs, asked about the 10:1 ratio at the President's meeting with congressional leaders on July 28, General Wheeler replied that four-to-one was the right ratio, and that "ten-to-one was not necessary because the helicopter had provided a new mobility." [208]

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[206] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.
[207] McNamara report, July 20, 1965, cited below.

After the completion of the report of the Ad Hoc Study Group on July 14, the JCS staff sent copies to the members of the JCS as well as to 15 other general officers with a memorandum from General Wheeler stating that he expected to discuss the report during his trip to Vietnam with McNamara, and that, "upon my return, I would like to consider what further action might be taken by the JCS with respect to the subject matter of this report." [209] According to General Goodpaster, who accompanied General Wheeler on the McNamara trip to Saigon, the report was discussed with Admiral Sharp (CINCPAC) and with General Westmoreland, both of whom "were in accord with the main concepts and with the main findings." Sharp, Goodpaster said in an interview some years later, took exception to a statement in the report about a possible stalemate in Vietnam. Goodpaster explained to Sharp that this was included in order to make it clear that the proposal was based on avoiding a stalemate. This explanation, he said, "met his [Sharp's] concern." "But he didn't even want to have any contemplation of stalemate." [210]

General Goodpaster said that the report was submitted by General Wheeler to Secretary McNamara, who, to his (Goodpaster's) knowledge, did not take any "explicit action on it." Goodpaster does not recall discussing the report with McNamara, but he does recall a comment by McNamara that, ". . . some of what I [Goodpaster] had put into the assumptions weren't really assumptions; that assumptions should relate only to what our adversaries do or countries such as China and Russia do, but not assumptions as to what our own government's policy would be or the restrictions imposed by our own government, or the freedom of our commanders to conduct operations by what they deemed to be the most effective methods." Goodpaster replied that it was necessary to state the assumptions on which the report was based; "Otherwise I would not want to be held to the conclusion that we reached." McNamara, he said, "recognized that it was necessary to give consideration to that, and I think that he felt it was a fair and honest way to present it, but because the report was conditioned on those assumptions," Goodpaster said, "that left open the question of what happens if those premises are not met. And I think he [McNamara] had some doubt in his mind—but this is just speculation on my part—as to whether those conditions and premises would be met."

In the interview, Goodpaster was asked whether McNamara or McNaughton "or anyone else involved on the civilian side had any problems with it [the report]." He replied: "No, but I would say that I had no evidence that they were committed to the judgments that were reached there. I think they just kept their position completely open as far as that was concerned."

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[208] These notes are in the Johnson Library, Meetings Notes File.

[209] U.S. Department of Defense, JCS Files, CM-744-65. The distribution list is contained in a one-page note on July 15 to the JCS from the Joint Secretariat which is attached to the front of the Goodpaster Report.

[210] CRS Interview with Andrew Goodpaster, Oct. 1, 1986.

From the available record, except for those in the military who received the report when it was distributed by the JCS staff on July 14, it is not possible to determine who received the Goodpaster Report, what discussions there might have been of it apart from those which Goodpaster had with Sharp and Westmoreland, and what role, if any, it played in the decisionmaking process. It is not known whether the report was distributed to other government agencies. It was sent through military channels to the White House, but it did not reach McGeorge Bundy until July 21, the day the President began discussing the McNamara report with his advisers, when Col. Richard C. Bowman, the NSC liaison officer with the JCS, sent it to Bundy with a note saying that the report "has no endorsement at the moment, and, therefore, should be treated as a non-study."

In the interview, Goodpaster was asked about Bowman's comment that it was a "non-study," and he replied: "Oh, that's some of that rather faddish language that was being used at the time, but what it really means is that it had no approval. It had not been sent through the Joint Chiefs of Staff as I recall, so they had not reviewed it or acted on it or approved it to send it forward."

Bowman's memorandum to Bundy added that the approach suggested in the Goodpaster Report, "looks like an excellent military concept, but the other half of the equation is equally important—an intense program to win over the peasant population and the Viet Cong irregulars, themselves." Asked about this in the interview, Goodpaster said: "We had that in mind as part of what we called the pacification program, and that we would leave to the South Vietnamese."

There is no available information to indicate whether McGeorge Bundy or the President himself read the report. Apparently it was not mentioned in the White House discussions on July 21-28 of the Westmoreland request prior to the announcement of the President's decision.

Chapter 6

THE PRESIDENT APPROVES WESTMORELAND'S REQUEST

In a press conference on July 9, 1965, President Johnson, in response to a pre-arranged question, stated that U.S. manpower needs in Vietnam "are increasing and will continue to do so." He said that U.S. forces would soon be up to 75,000, and, "There will be others that will be required. Whatever is required I am sure will be supplied."[1]

On July 11, 1965, Ambassador Taylor, with the concurrence of his top associates, sent a long cable to Washington analyzing the situation in South Vietnam.[2] Since June 5, he said, the military situation in South Vietnam ". . . has continued gradually to worsen despite a few bright spots occasioned by RVNAF [Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces] successes. In general the VC main and local forces, reinforced by militia and guerrillas, retain the initiative as in the past. . . ." ". . . we are faced," he concluded, "with prospect of successive tactical reverses, piecemeal destruction of ARVN units, and gradual loss of key communication and population centers, particularly in the highlands.[3] Unless this trend is reversed, there will be a growing danger of attrition of RVNAF will to fight in months ahead, accompanied by a similar loss of civilian confidence."

Although some South Vietnamese Army units had been performing well, the cable said, "Currently, ARVN battle-worthiness is at a low level. . . . ARVN over-all is not capable of successfully resisting the VC monsoon offensive without more active assistance from more U.S./third country ground forces than those thus far committed."

Communist forces, on the other hand, were stronger than ever, and were being augmented by units of the North Vietnamese Regular Army.[4]

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[1] *Public Papers of the Presidents*, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, p. 725. According to William Bundy, MS., ch. 27, p. 22, these statements were a "trial balloon" to test public and congressional reactions and to prepare the public and Congress for further troop increases.

[2] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Saigon to Washington 108, July 11, 1965.

[3] According to a CIA Intelligence Memorandum, "The Viet Cong Campaign in South Vietnam's Highlands," July 9, 1965, SC No. 07361/65, "The Viet Cong campaign to expand their control of South Vietnam's central highlands bordering southern Laos and Cambodia has sharply accelerated in the past few weeks." Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[4] Following earlier reports on the subject (see p. 225 above), it was estimated in the cable, as well as in the CIA memorandum of July 9, that the 101st Regiment of the North Vietnamese 325th Division was fighting with Communist forces in Kontum Province, and it was "regarded as probable although not yet confirmed" that the 18th and 95th Regiments of the 325th Division were also engaged in combat in the central highlands. These regiments, each of which consisted of approximately 1,200 soldiers, were reported, as was mentioned earlier, to be widely dispersed, however, and were not fighting as units. According to a State Department cable prepared by State intelligence officers and cleared by Defense intelligence officers, intelligence on the presence of the 325th infantry unit "Comes almost entirely from interrogation of four personnel captured or defected from units of 325th during period March-June 1965." U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Washington to Paris 15, July 12, 1965.

Politically, the situation was also very tenuous. Although Premier Ky had "demonstrated great vigor," "prognostications concerning the prospects of long-term survival for his government are risky indeed on the basis of only three-week's observation . . . [but] they cannot be rated as good." "The Government's staying power will depend to a great extent on its effectiveness in prosecuting the war. . . . If the present disadvantageous trend of the war is not reversed, a resurgence of military and political factionalism must then be anticipated with resulting political turbulence accompanied possibly by uncoordinated efforts to negotiate settlement with the DRV."

The cable also reported that the rural reconstruction (pacification) program, especially in the northern provinces, had "lost ground rapidly in the past six weeks as a result of the VC monsoon offensive." "What becomes clear is that progress in rural reconstruction depends upon the over-all balance of power between GVN and the VC, and that whenever and wherever the VC have the initiative and greater relative strength, particularly in main forcē elements, and are prepared to commit them, any local progress in rural reconstruction becomes virtually impossible." [5]

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[5] On July 8, possibly in connection with Rusk's meeting with the Wise Men, the State Department Office of Intelligence and Research sent him, at his request, a list of "Assets and Liabilities in Vietnam" drafted by three veteran Southeast Asia intelligence analysts, Allen S. Whiting, Evelyn S. Colbert, and Lewis G. Sarris (U.S. Department of State, Lot File 74 D 272):

"*Assets*

"1. Buddhist-Catholic relations, although still tense, are well below the flash-points of 1963 (the Diem crisis) and August 1964 (Khanh crisis).

"2. The 'revolutionary' approach of the Ky government has considerable appeal for a broad segment of the important civilian element: the Buddhists, the militant Catholics, the students, and the younger politicians.

"3. The increase in U.S. forces has not produced any increase in anti-U.S. sentiment; to the contrary the increased U.S. commitment has been welcomed and produced a higher level of confidence.

"4. Although the desertion rate is a problem it is still a tolerable one and is far below the rate for the Chinese nationalists in the period 1946-1949.

"5. Battlefront casualties (over 3,000 in June) far exceed missing in action (over 800 missing or captured in June); the ARVN still prefers fighting to running.

"6. Despite the government's many problems, it has not engaged in police brutality, excessive repression, or large-scale corruption that could be exploited by VC propaganda.

"7. There is no Viet Cong leader who has the charismatic appeal of Ho Chi Minh or Mao and who could, on this basis, win over the youth or other disgruntled elements.

"8. Experience with the Viet Minh during the Indo-China war and, since then, with DRV policies in the North have made the Catholics, Buddhists, and Cao Dai and Hoa Hao religious sects distrustful and fearful of the VC.

"9. VC deprivations—shorgages of food, shelter, and medicines—are far worse than those of ARVN and are being accentuated by air action.

"10. There have been no prominent defections from the GVN to the VC or the National Liberation Front.

"11. The military and civilian leaderships show no sign of weakening in their resolve to continue the war, even though they are concerned with the impact of war-weariness on the country as a whole.

"12. Despite heavy casualties, the GVN military and paramilitary forces remain intact numbering close to 500,000.

"*Liabilities*

"1. There is no single leader who can rally the entire people behind him or fully overcome rivalries and suspicions between such groups as the Buddhists and the Catholics whose differences could flare to dangerous levels.

"2. The political sophistication and the range of military leadership has been diminished by constant coups; preoccupation with political problems could further reduce military effectiveness.

"3. The VC has a clear superiority over the US and the GVN in intelligence and counterintelligence and methods of political organization and control in the countryside.

"4. The VC has the initiative in their ability to carry out surprise hit and run attacks, conceal their losses, choose the locus of action for maximum political value, and avoid crushing defeats.

Continued

McNamara's Trip to Vietnam

On July 13, 1965, McNaughton sent to McGeorge Bundy "on a strictly personal basis" a draft of the report to be made after McNamara's trip to Vietnam, which was to begin on July 14.[6] The chief drafting officer was Adam Yarmolinsky, McNaughton's deputy, who commented in an interview some years later that McNamara "regarded his trips as theater, and, in fact, the report was usually drafted before he left and then revised in the light of what assessments they made of what people told them. . . . I don't think, and he may contradict me, that he would say that those 24, 48, and 72 hour trips were in any sense fact-finding."[7]

In the draft report, McNaughton took the position that the 44 battalion request and related measures, such as increased bombing of North Vietnam and calling up the Reserves, should be approved "with the object of 'winning' [which was referred to as 'à la Malaya/Philippines'] as defined in para E.[8] If it appears wise at some point, we should settle for a 'compromise' [referred to as 'à la Laos 1962/Vietnam 1954'] (again see para E)."

This was paragraph E:

Win (Package A)	*Compromise (Package B)*
[À la Malaya/Philippines]	[À la Laos 1962/Vietnam 1954]
1. VC attacks stop	1. (Same)
2. VC terror & sabotage at low level	2. (Same)
3. DRV/VC infiltration very limited	3. (Same)
a. US eye-recce [reconnaissance] of NVN continues	a. US eye-recce of border areas continued of NVN continues
b. US naval screen only for verification	b. (Same)
c. "Rt 9 barrier" dampening infiltration(?)	c. (Same)
4. US bombing of NVN stops (see 3a)	4. (Same)
5. Independent GVN (hopefully pro-U.S.)	5. Independent GVN ("nationalist")
6. GVN functions in almost all of SVN	6. GVN treats VC areas gingerly

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"5. The pacification effort has come to a virtual standstill in most areas which, coupled with ARVN withdrawals from the countryside, has placed an increase proportion of the peasants at the mercy of the VC.

"6. The VC has thus far been able to avoid crippling blows to its ability to infiltrate, conceal and supply itself among the population, and move its forces without detection.

"7. ARVN treatment of POW's diminishes both its intelligence capability and its ability to win over more defectors.

"8. The willingness of the DRV to support the VC has been unaffected so far by US attacks and the pipeline from the North remains virtually unimpaired.

"9. VC sabotage and interdiction capabilities have disrupted lines of communication, isolated a number of urban centers, and greatly interfered with the distribution of necessities to the population.

"10. Despite the heavy casualties suffered by the VC, their motivation, dedication, and unity remain very high.

"11. Political upheavals and coups have reduced the effectiveness and initiatives of the GVN Bureaucracy and lowered the international standing of the Vietnamese government."

[6] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, "Analysis and Options for South Vietnam."

[7] CRS Interview with Adam Yarmolinsky, Oct. 27, 1978.

[8] Once again (see p. 157 above), McNaughton gave a percentage breakdown of U.S. aims in the war:

"70%—To preserve our national honor as a guarantor (and the reciprocal: to avoid a showcase success for Communist 'wars of liberation').

"20%—To keep SVN (and then adjacent) territory from hostile expansive hands.

"10%—To 'answer the call of a friend,' to help him enjoy a better life.

"ALSO—To emerge from crisis without unacceptable taint from the methods used."

Win (Package A)	*Compromise (Package B)*
[À la Malaya/Philippines]	[À la Laos 1962/Vietnam 1954]
7. No major Red gains in Laos	7. (Same)
8. No significant Red gains in Thailand	8. (Same)
9. PAVN [People's Army of Vietnam] forces (not regroupees) withdrawn	9. (Same)
10. VC practically disbanded	10. VC continue defensively only
a. Amnesty for VC	a. (Same)
b. VC taxation virtually stops	b. VC taxation only in VC areas
c. DRV-VC coded messages stopped	c. DRV-VC coded messages reduced
11. US removes combat forces	11. US reduces forces
12. US continues AID to SVN	12. (Same)
13. DRV propaganda continues	13. (Same)
14. "Revolutionary" GVN domestic program	14. (Same)
15. Local & national elections promised	15. Firm dates; NLF on ballots
16. NLF permitted as political party	16. NLF leaders permitted in government
17. GVN & DRV members of UN	17. (Same)

The draft report also concluded, however, that there was only a 50-50 chance of a "win" ("à la Malaya/Philippines") by 1968, even using "200,000 400,000 +" U.S. troops.[9] These were McNaughton's estimates for "the probability of Success/Inconclusive/Collapse":

Win (Package A) assuming the use of 200,000-400,000 U.S. troops:

By 1966: 20/70/10
By 1967: 40/45/15
By 1968: 50/30/20

Compromise (Package B), assuming the use of 200,000-400,000 U.S. troops:

By 1966: 40/50/10
By 1967: 60/25/15
By 1968: 70/10/20

According to the draft report, of the "tolerable options" only the Package B compromise ("à la Laos 1962/Vietnam 1954") "looks promising."

The report also concluded:

> . . . even if "success," it is not obvious how we will be able to disengage our forces from South Vietnam. It is unlikely that a formal agreement good enough for the purpose could possibly be negotiated—because the arrangement can reflect little more than the power situation. Most likely, in the case of success, is a settling down into a "compromise"-like situation with a large number—perhaps 2 divisions—of US forces required to stay on for a period of years. During that period of time, any number of things can change the picture beyond prediction.

With respect to the possible reaction of the Russians and Chinese, McNaughton's draft report stated: "Neither the Soviets nor

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[9] William Bundy says that he would probably have put the odds at 50-50 for 1967 and higher than that for 1968, and that this was an estimate that would have been ". . . nearer the midpoint of judgment among the senior policy circle than either the McNamara or the Westmoreland views." He adds, however, "What is, of course, painfully obvious is that *all* of the recorded estimates, even that of McNaughton, were too sanguine from the outset." Bundy MS., ch. 30, p. 8. (emphasis in original)

Chinese are likely to intervene if we do not strike China, do not quarantine the North Vietnamese ports and do not invade North Vietnam." In a Special National Intelligence Estimate on July 23, the U.S. Intelligence Board agreed.[10]

In addition to recommending increased U.S. military involvement, McNaughton's draft of McNamara's report recommended a number of other steps, including getting other Asian troops to fight in South Vietnam. "Money," it stated, "except as the 'purchase' of such forces is counterproductive politically, should be no object."

Basing its estimates of the outcome of the conflict on the assumption of "maximum ingenuity on the all-important political side," the report recommended these political actions:

> 1. Announce the decision to deploy, to call up reserves, and to extend tours.
> 2. Presidential speech putting the war in context and making clear that our objectives are no more nor less than those listed in the "win" column of para E. Put major emphasis on infiltration and terror; indicate that the form of government in South Vietnam, if not imposed by North Vietnam, is not a major concern of ours.
> 3. Keep talking with Moscow—not "with tongue out," but to avoid their imagining untrue horrors and to impress on them the seriousness of the matter, our resolution, and our desire to have them help and advice in working it out.
> 4. Press allies, friends and UN to seek ways to settle the war.
> 5. Press for a Geneva conference.
> 6. Make contact directly (or have the GVN contact) the DRV and NLF to make clear our determination but readiness to settle the war.
> 7. Let it be known that we are willing to try a "stoppage of bombing" of North Vietnam if it holds any promise of helping.
> 8. Invite an international military force to police the infiltration routes.

On July 14, 1965, McNamara, with a group that included McNaughton, Henry Cabot Lodge (who had been named to replace Taylor), General Wheeler, General Goodpaster, Leonard Unger (William Bundy's deputy—Bundy was recovering from an infection), William Colby from the CIA, NSC staff member Chester Cooper, and Arthur Sylvester, the Pentagon's press secretary, left for Vietnam. The purpose of the trip, according to McGeorge Bundy in a comment some years later, ". . . was to build a consensus on what was needed to be done to turn the tide—not to cover a retreat. Within that purpose he [the President] was glad to have all sorts of options . . . [discussed], but his own priority was to get agreement, at the lowest level of intensity he could, on a course that would meet the present need in Vietnam and not derail his legislative calendar."[11]

In advance of the trip, McNamara sent a cable to Taylor and Westmoreland on July 7 explaining the purpose of the visit and listing the two major and 25 additional questions which he said the group would be asking.[12] The purpose of the visit, he said, would be to receive from U.S. officials in Saigon specific recommendations for the number and kinds of forces being requested and the timing for deployment of those forces. In addition, the group wanted to know "the results which we can expect to achieve with such force levels compared to those of alternative programs; the probable requirements for additional forces next year; and the program of political contacts which you propose as a complement to your military actions." "We will wish to discuss possible additional political initiatives of our own, third party initiatives, our dealings with the Soviets, and the possibility of some form of contact with DRV and/or NLF."

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[10] SNIE, 10-9-65, cited below, p. 413.

[11] Berman, *Planning a Tragedy*, p. 145, letter from McGeorge Bundy to Berman.

The two major questions which McNamara said the group would ask were:[13]

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[12] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, McNamara to Taylor, Defense 5319, July 7, 1965.

[13] The 25 additional questions were:

"1. How did you determine the number of U.S. and ARVN battalions required to effectively counter the current or prospective Viet Cong forces?

"2. Where do you propose to station U.S. combat units and where and how will they be used; what casualties do you expect?

"3. How long do you think it will take with your recommended forces (a) to seize the initiative, (b) to prove to the Viet Cong that they cannot win, and (c) thereby to force them to a settlement on our terms?

"4. Would it be wise to withdraw GVN military and paramilitary forces from certain outlying or exposed positions in order to concentrate in positions of strength and to reduce the penalties of the serious shortage of Government troops?

"5. What reaction to the expansion of U.S. and third-country forces do you expect from the VC and the DRV?

"6. Is the currently approved construction program adequate for the expanded force?

"7. Is the current MAP [military assistance program] adequate?

"8. What command arrangements do you propose for the expanded U.S. force when engaged in combat?

"9. What program of military pressure (bombing, mining, etc.) against North Vietnam, in terms of the types of targets, level of effort, etc., do you propose for the next six months as a complement to your plan of action in the South?

"10. How effective has been the bombing of the Laotian infiltration routes; what Laotian bombing program do you recommend for the future in terms of specific targets and level of effort?

"11. How effective have been the B-52 strikes; assuming 800 B-52 sorties are available each month, what bombing program do you recommend for the future in terms of specific targets and level of effort?

"12. Exclusive of B-52 sorties, how many strike sorties and how many reconnaissance sorties per month do you recommend against targets in South Vietnam during the next six months; are all of your current requirements being met; if not, why not; should we be planning on additional airfields for South Vietnam and if so, by what date are they required and where should they be placed?

"13. What has been the trend of each of the major indicators (population control, area control, desertions, weapons losses, terror incidents, price level, etc.) of the success or failure of the counterinsurgency campaign over the past year?

"14. How does the freedom of movement today over the railroads and the major highways and waterways compare with that of a year ago?

"15. What measures do we have of the success or failure of our efforts to prevent infiltration of men and equipment by sea; has the recently expanded program reduced such infiltration; if not, why not; are additional forces required?

"16. Outline and appraise the effectiveness of alternative plans (including a barrier across the 17th Parallel) for the use of U.S. troops in Laos for the purpose of preventing infiltration of men and equipment through that country into South Vietnam.

"17. If you think it is possible militarily to cut off or very substantially cut down the infiltration of North Vietnamese personnel and materiel from the North to the South, when do you believe it will begin to have an important effect on VC activities and how decisive will that effect be?

"18. Has the Hop Tac Program [a pacification program in the area around Saigon] succeeded; if, as it appears to us, it has not, review the program in detail to throw light on the causes of its failure?

Continued

> A. Assuming your proposals are fully accepted, what assurance do we have that with the resulting force level we can prove to the Viet Cong they cannot win, and thereby force them to a settlement on our terms?
>
> B. Will large increases in the number and involvement of US combat units and military personnel in South Vietnam cause the Vietnamese Government, and especially the Army, to let up; will it create adverse popular reactions to our presence in the country?

Answers to the two major and 25 additional questions were provided to McNamara by Westmoreland.[14] In response to the first of the two major questions (whether new force levels would convince the Communists that they could not win), Westmoreland replied:[15]

> No reasonable assurances can be given that we can prove to the Viet Cong that they cannot win and force them to settle on our terms. The VC/DRV can and probably will increase their force structure as we announce plans to increase ours. The VC/DRV also have the option of avoiding conclusive military confrontations with GVN/US forces by dispersing within large segments of the population or withdrawing to unpopulated areas which they control. In these areas we have no assurances that we can find, fix and destroy the VC. However, our proposed force increases are believed to be adequate to insure the retention of vital areas and to permit us to initiate mobile operations on an increasing scale. On the other hand this increased force posture is not believed sufficient to eliminate the widespread VC capability for control of major segments of the country. VC willingness to come to terms will depend on the effectiveness of Rolling Thunder, the attitudes of Hanoi and Peking, stability of the GVN, an estimate of US determination

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"19. Outline the original plan for the expansion of the GVN military, paramilitary and police forces; the progress to date against that plan; and changes, if any, which you propose for the future.

"20. Do you concur in the conclusions of the recent RAND study of the morale of VC forces?

"21. How important is the monsoon to military operations and to the military balance, and how should we expect military prospects to change when the monsoon ends?

"22. Would it be possible to implement the Acheson Plan [Acheson-Ball plan] in the near future, starting in the 4th Corps; is it feasible to initiate such a plan in a particular area before it has been proven to the Viet Cong that they cannot win?

"23. After the deployment of the recommended U.S. forces, how would the GVN react to an extended pause (six or eight weeks) in the bombing of the DRV?

"24. Should we consider the imposition of press censorship after the expansion of US forces?

"25. What contacts do the South Vietnamese now have with the NLF and the DRV; what additional contacts would you recommend that they or the US have with those parties or the Soviets; how should such U.S. contacts be initiated and with what notice to the GVN?"

[14] A copy of Westmoreland's reply is in U.S. Department of State, Lot File 67 D 45.

[15] In his memoirs (*Swords and Plowshares*, p. 349), Taylor said:

"The fundamental question which McNamara posed at the outset was whether the requested increase in U.S. military strength would force the Vietcong to a settlement on our terms. Our answer to it was negative. By the arithmetic of this irregular war, one fresh, combat-ready guerrilla introduced into operations in South Vietnam required the addition of four to eight soldiers on our side to compensate for him, a disadvantage which we shared with the police of any city in rounding up the criminals in their jurisdiction. Hence, we recognized that the Vietcong and Hanoi could always make a compensating increase in their forces and would probably continue to do so until they became convinced by some combination of factors—the air campaign, American, Chinese, and Russian governmental attitudes, the combat performance of the Vietnamese forces, or the resulting balance of power in South Vietnam—that they could not hope for victory and must sue for peace from self-interest. Since we could never be sure when this turning point might come, we could not base our plans on quick results but had to be prepared for a long campaign of uncertain duration."

and other factors, as well as the military situation within SVN.

McNamara and his party arrived in Saigon on July 15, and on July 16, together with Taylor, Westmoreland, U. Alexis Johnson, and several others from the U.S. Mission in Saigon, they met with Ky and Thieu and several other Vietnamese leaders. The Vietnamese described the situation and their plans for the future. Thieu, who presided, said that during its three weeks in office the new government had taken a "firm stand," and that religious and political groups appeared to support its program.[16] He stressed the desire of the new government to take steps to achieve governmental stability and public support and to win the war. The new government, he said, "had first sought to make clear to the people that . . . [it] would be resolute in prosecuting the war, in winning ultimate victory over the VC, and in bringing peace with freedom to South Vietnam. Secondly, the new government is attempting to push forward vigorously with the war effort in the countryside and to organize the people in the rear. In order to generate popular support emphasis has been placed on bringing to the people a greater measure of social justice. The GVN has attempted to do this by 'cleaning up' the organization and administration in Saigon and the countryside, by applying an austerity program, and by focusing attention on corruption and taking measures to eliminate corruption." [17]

After a presentation by the Minister of Finance, there was a presentation of South Vietnamese military plans in which it was suggested that the U.S. and other countries should deploy combat forces in the highlands and in the area immediately adjacent to Saigon, leaving the more populous coastal lowlands and delta regions to South Vietnamese forces. Under this arrangement, U.S. and third-country forces would engage in search and destroy operations against Communist main force units and in the protection of bases, while South Vietnamese forces would be responsible for pacification and the protection of the population.

McNamara asked how many U.S. troops the South Vietnamese wanted to have, and Thieu's reply was that they wanted 44 battalions, plus one infantry division to be deployed around Saigon. McNamara asked whether the Vietnamese people would "readily accept an American presence of this magnitude," and Ky and

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[16] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington Airgram A-66, July 27, 1965, Memorandum of Conversation, "Subject: Secretary McNamara's Visit: Meeting With GVN, July 16, 1965."

[17] On July 14, Deputy Ambassador Johnson met with Bui Diem, Ky's assistant, to discuss the meeting between South Vietnamese officials and the McNamara party. (U.S. Department of State, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 140, July 14, 1965.) During the discussion, Bui Diem mentioned a mass celebration that the South Vietnamese Government was planning to hold on July 20, the theme of which would be "Unity in the South in Preparation for the Liberation of the North," which the McNamara party had been invited to attend (but declined). U. Alexis Johnson acknowledged that it was appropriate for there to be "4th of July oratory" on such an occasion, but cautioned Bui Diem that the South Vietnamese Government should not "make statements indicating a material difference in view between us in our war aims and give ammunition both domestically and internationally to the opponents of our policy here, especially at a time when McNamara would be returning to the States with presumably some new recommendations." At the meeting with McNamara's party, Thieu commented: " 'It is time to think of North Vietnam and to creating a psychological situation there so that the Vietnamese people in the DRV can help themselves to fight communism.' " Probably as a result of the Johnson-Bui Diem discussion, this was Thieu's only allusion to that particular issue.

Thieu replied that they saw no problem. Thieu said that "most Vietnamese did not consider the U.S. as having any colonialist aspirations," but that the impact of U.S. forces would be minimized if, as proposed, they operated in less-populated areas.

McNamara asked whether, if the forces were sent, the U.S. could count on a stable Government in South Vietnam. Thieu replied that previous governments had not had a "clear policy" and were not strong enough to carry out their policies and to bring social justice while also fighting the Communists. However, if South Vietnamese forces could be used for pacification, the Government could demonstrate that it was able to govern effectively.

McNamara asked if more U.S. forces were deployed whether the Communists would increase their forces and what the U.S. and the South Vietnamese should do if that happened. Thieu replied that U.S. bombing could help control infiltration, but that half of the manpower in South Vietnam was controlled by the Communists and it was essential, therefore, for the Government "to take steps to bring this manpower pool under GVN control."

Ky concluded the meeting by saying that the South Vietnamese "long for a strong, stable government," and that the new government "would do its best to maintain stability."

> General Ky said the reason for government instability in the past has been primarily the lack of social justice. At present corruption exists everywhere, the rich get richer while the mass of the poor Vietnamese see little hope for improvement. The mass of Vietnamese are therefore very vulnerable to VC propaganda. In his view previous governments had based their support primarily on the promises of support from minority groups, such as the religious sects and groups of politicians. In contrast, the current government intends to emphasize support of the mass of the Vietnamese, particularly of the poor Vietnamese, and to give them a sense of hope and confidence in the future. Ky said the GVN would ask for more sacrifices from the people and the members of the government were prepared to make their individual sacrifices. The GVN considers the political and religious groups as being merely individual Vietnamese citizens and not as groups which could validly claim a controlling voice in government policies. It was necessary for the Vietnamese to unite on one road to victory. In this connection none of the Ministers in his government represented any particular group or faction and they were deliberately chosen for this reason. Ky said the GVN hoped to satisfy U. S. public opinion concerning governmental stability by making the government strong and stable enough to carry out this announced policy.

In his memoir, Bui Diem says that he prepared a memorandum of policy questions for Ky to take up with McNamara,[18] but that

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[18] These, which were prepared on July 14, and which Bui Diem referred to in a general way is his discussion that day with U. Alexis Johnson, were as follows (Bui Diem, *In the Jaws of History*, p. 156):

"What are overall U.S. war objectives: outright military victory? negotiated settlement?

"If negotiated settlement, what are negotiation positions and objectives?

Continued

Ky did not ask them. "Perhaps," Bui Diem says, "Ky was too timid or inexperienced to ask them. It seemed as if McNamara and his team were far more interested in collecting data than in revealing their policies or plans." [19]

Later that afternoon (July 16), McNamara and his party met from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. with Taylor and Westmoreland and their top associates. After briefings by Westmoreland and his staff, there were questions and answers.[20]

Westmoreland is reported to have told McNamara, (based on the study which was being undertaken during July by Westmoreland's staff after McNamara had asked General Wheeler whether the 44 battalions would be adequate to "win" the war), that in 1966 he would need an additional 100,000 troops—24 maneuver battalions (this came to be known as the "24 battalion add-on").[21]

As the meeting of McNamara with Westmoreland and his staff continued, Brig. Gen. Joseph A. McChristian, J-2 (Intelligence), gave a briefing which dealt in part with the question of infiltration of supplies from the North, after which there was this exchange:

> Mr. McNamara: Does the figure of 14 tons a day represent a current inflow of supplies from North to South Vietnam?
>
> Gen. Wheeler: That was an estimate of requirements at the present level of activity with the present number of combat troops.
>
> Mr. McNamara: There is evidence of stockpiling. My point is that there is a small flow of supplies which must come into the country to support guerrillas here. The chances of stopping that by aerial attack are rather small. I am trying to be realistic with the figures at hand. We must say two things: (1) that they can continue to increase their forces by bringing many more people into the country, and (2) that they are today not so dependent upon outside supply that aerial attack is likely to stop them or reduce them substantially below the required level of supply. Now if those things are true, it requires a sub-

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"If outright victory, how is victory defined: Formal surrender by Vietcong? By North Vietnam? Conquest of North Vietnam? Simple cessation of Vietcong and North Vietnamese aggression?

"What are desires of U.S. concerning joint military command or unified command?

"How many troops will U.S. deploy in South Vietnam? For what length of time?"

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 152. "As soon as he [McNamara] started the meeting," Bui Diem says, "it was clear that he was going to follow his own exclusive agenda. Precise but affable, scribbling notes on a yellow pad as he went, he fired his questions about numbers, organization, management and logistics as if he were bent on assembling all the factors and components for the solution of some grand mathematical equation. Apparently preoccupied by his own line of thought, he paid little attention to those around him. As far as I could judge, he made absolutely no effort to size up Nguyen Cao Ky, who was sitting directly across the table from him."

[20] National Archives, Westmoreland-CBS Papers, "Record of Questions and Answers at Meeting Between Secretary McNamara and his Party, Ambassador Taylor and his Staff, and COMUSMACV and his Staff, 16 [and 17] July 1965." This transcript of the meeting does not include the texts of the briefings.

[21] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. 4, p. 296. On July 22, 1965, Westmoreland sent a cable to CINCPAC (220625Z) giving further details of the 1966 requirement. *Ibid.*, p. 297.

For Krepinevich's comments on the way in which Westmoreland's staff calculated these force requirements, see pp. 157-158 of *The Army and Vietnam*. His conclusion: "The MACV Staff quickly realized that with the current force ratio at 1.7:1, traditional force ratios of 10:1 or 15:1 posited for counterinsurgency were out of reach. However, rather than question the Army's approach to the war, the staff fit the insurgency to suit the desired American strategy and the resources at hand for executing it."

Krepinevich notes but does not comment on the Goodpaster Report, which had not been declassified at the time his book was published.

> stantial amount of action on our part, inside this country, that we are not now taking.
>
> Amb. Taylor: There is something wrong with our calculations, and I am not sure where we are wrong. We are talking about bringing two additional divisions into the country and maintaining them in combat in forward positions at great expense. It is amazing to me how the VC can bring all their people into the country and support them with so little effort when we have such a hell of a time supporting ours. The VC in regimental action should expend about 140 tons per day, but this they can support because the VC don't have that many big actions.
>
> Mr. McNamara: Just doing what they are doing, they are taking over the country on 14 tons a day. To be real strict we must assume that they can take over even more of the country on 28 tons a day. It's pretty cheap warfare for them, so we had better learn how to do it. In order to stop the meager supplies of 14 tons per day it would take tremendous activity on the ground, which up until now we didn't have. The question is how the VC can get along with so little supplies when it takes the US forces so much to support themselves.

McNamara added: ". . . if it's true they are existing on 14 tons a day, then we are going to have to figure some other way [other than bombing the North] to counter this on the ground."

"These are my conclusions," McNamara then told the group, "but I would like you to prove me wrong":

> (1) The VC can recruit a lot more people than they currently have. We should be prepared to increase our strength accordingly.
>
> (2) It has not taken many supplies to support the VC in the past. It doesn't take many supplies now. And, I don't think it's going to take many in the future.
>
> (3) Because it takes so few supplies, aerial attacks are not going to cut into the VC logistics to a damaging degree. I am not saying that we should stop our aerial attacks. However, I do say that we are going to need a lot more men in the South to effectively counter this on the ground.

Before anyone responded, McNamara turned to another subject and the discussion of this particular question ended.

The next morning (July 17), the meeting resumed, and after a briefing by General DePuy, J-3 (Operations), there was a discussion of the role that U.S. forces would play in South Vietnam. Lodge noted that the South Vietnamese wanted U.S. forces to be deployed to the highlands. Westmoreland replied: "That is true, however, I do not go along with the concept." McNamara agreed with Westmoreland.

Chester Cooper commented that if the South Vietnamese could control the delta and the cities and the area around Saigon, "they could very much better cover what really counts in the South." General DePuy replied: "That's true, except psychologically—and this is what counts. If Saigon and the Delta area were secure, more than half of the population would be covered. However, this is not what we intend to do."

Cooper asked whether there were plans to interdict infiltration routes from Laos, and General DePuy replied: "We are inclined to believe that it is more effective to go after VC bases than to go after infiltration parties." There were no plans, he said, for blocking infiltration routes.

Lodge asked whether the 44 battalions would be "enough to meet maximum mobilization by the VC." DePuy replied: "With Phase I [the 44 battalions] and II [an additional 24 battalions in 1966] programmed forces, we can make some forward movement; also if bombing strategy has the effect we expect, that solves the problem. If the bombing doesn't have the effect we attribute to it or hope for it, then we have to take a whole new look at the magnitude of US and allied forces in South Vietnam, and there will be a much larger requirement." To this McNamara responded: "I don't think we can be sure. I don't think we should start on a 44-battalion program without recognizing that, one, it may well have to be followed by a phase II with 24 additional battalions, and, two, it is conceivable that a phase III will be needed with still additional battalions because of the million man pool [the estimate of the manpower pool available to the Communists in the area they controlled in South Vietnam] and the possibility of substantial VC build-up."

McNamara also asked Westmoreland, "How does one get the VC to fight?" Westmoreland replied:

> It will require a great deal of ingenuity of tactical commanders. We must have the best, smartest tactical US commanders that can be provided. We must use cover and deception to trick the VC to stand up and fight. The greatest casualties inflicted by the VC have been as a result of their ambush tactics. We have to develop counter tactics so we can capitalize on the vulnerabilities of the VC when he tries to exercise his standard guerrilla tactics of the ambush.

Unger asked what would happen if the Communists continued to use guerrilla tactics. "This is a legitimate fear," Westmoreland replied. "The chances of their standing up to fight US forces is questionable; they may be hard to find." General Wheeler spoke up: "We should go into their base areas and destroy them; then it becomes a police problem. This is the way to destroy the VC."

Chester Cooper commented: "The VC could take over in the South if the GVN isn't able to root out the activists, or their assets, in the area," to which Colby responded: "You cannot knock out the 'Mafia' or the infrastructure unless you knock out the main force units."

On July 20, before the McNamara party left Saigon to return to Washington, Cooper received a memorandum from Gordon L. Jorgensen, Chief of the CIA Station in Saigon, stating what Jorgensen said was the "local station views," with which he said Colby generally agreed, on the question of deploying U.S. forces in the highlands while deploying South Vietnamese forces in the delta and the coastal plains: [22]

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[22] Jorgensen's memorandum, "Comments on Vietnamese Highlands Concept," July 20, 1965, was sent to McNamara by Cooper on July 20 as an attachment to his own memorandum (cited below). Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

> We recognize that some MACV officers and some members of Secretary McNamara's party were perhaps skeptical of this GVN proposal, feeling that the Vietnamese were trying to put one over on the U.S. by persuading the Americans to carry the brunt of the war, while the Vietnamese took life easy in pacification tasks in the lowlands. There may also have been some concern in both CINCPAC and MACV circles over the possibility of a Dien Bien Phu debacle should U.S. forces be committed in the highlands without an adequate logistical infrastructure. Another unpleasant possibility is that the GVN concept might find U.S. troops engaged in nonproductive sweeps of the sort that proved so frustrating in the past to ARVN and the French.

"We feel," the CIA memorandum said, "there is substantial merit in the GVN concept." [23]

> It appears to us that the two major tasks now confronting the U.S. in Vietnam are essentially the military one of neutralizing or destroying growing enemy capabilities for large-scale, semiconventional combat operations, and the more complex political-military one of pacification. We are inclined to agree with the GVN that U.S. combat forces have considerable advantages over the RVNAF in the first task, while the converse is true with the second task. (One immediate additional political advantage not mentioned by the GVN is that the problem of gaining Montagnard support against the VC can only be resolved favorably if the U.S. rather than ARVN has primacy in the Highlands. The long-term problem of Montagnard relations with the Vietnamese would remain, although the Montagnards would probably emerge sufficiently strengthened to force the GVN to treat them seriously and thereby facilitate solution of the problem.) Concern that the U.S. may bear the brunt of casualties is not fully justified, since a major portion of GVN losses normally are sustained in small-scale actions associated with expanding or protecting areas under GVN control. The possibilities of a Dien Bien Phu-like defeat of U.S. Forces is relatively remote at this stage, since current Viet Cong logistical potential in the Highlands is far weaker

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[23] The memorandum listed these specific points:

"a. The bulk of the enemy main force and PAVN Regiments in Central Vietnam are now deployed in the Highlands;

"b. RVNAF lacks the capability to reinforce those units now deployed in the Highlands to the strength required to cope with these enemy Regiments;

"c. U.S. forces possess air cargo transport, tactical air support, troop helicopter lift, and engineer support means required to permit effective operations in the Highlands area;

"d. U.S. ground combat forces are better capable of dealing with enemy main force units because of superior combat effectiveness, i.e. larger battalions, up-to-strength, heavier firepower, greater mobility, etc.;

"e. The pacification task in the densely populated coastal plains for which the RVNAF would be responsible is best performed by Vietnamese rather than U.S. and Allied Forces for political and psychological reasons;

"f. The sparsely populated Highlands region, on the other hand, is more suited to mobile action and intense air and artillery bombardments which would characterize U.S. operations;

"g. What population there is, i.e. Montagnards, will rally to U.S. presence and leadership;

"h. The GVN concept would simplify the combined command problem by giving U.S. Forces a definite area of responsibility and diminish the scope of troop population frictions;

"i. It would also apply a major U.S. force against vital GV [*sic*] infiltration routes into SVN and facilitate any necessary later military intervention in Southern Laos for the same purpose;

"j. It is the clearest and most unmistakeable signal the U.S. can give to the DRV that it means business."

> than ours, given their lack of motorable road connecting the Highlands through the panhandle with North Vietnam. Until a route is built which could move supplies on the order of 100 tons daily as at Dien Bien Phu, the VC would be patently incapable of sustaining siege operations on the scale of Dien Bien Phu. In the interim, we also would be developing our logistical infrastructure and conducting operations against Viet Cong base areas which could retard, if not prevent, development of their capabilities.

Another major factor in favor of the deployment of U.S. forces to the highlands, Jorgensen said, was "the vital need to prevent the Viet Cong from gaining complete domination of the highlands, which they could develop into a vast redoubt and base area contiguous to the Laos panhandle." "The Communists . . . while considering the populace and the rice-rich delta areas as their main goal, also intend to gain control over the highlands and then draw US/GVN forces into the area under conditions in which we would be defeated piecemeal. The best means of preventing this situation from developing would be to establish ourselves in the highlands in strength now, and then carry the war to the Viet Cong to destroy their bases, block development of their lines of communication, and systematically eliminate their main force units."

The memorandum added: "Unless ARVN forces in the highlands are soon reinforced, we stand an even chance of losing the remainder of Kontum Province in the weeks ahead, giving them [the Communists] a head start toward attaining their goals."

The McNamara Report, July 20, 1965

On July 20, McNamara returned to Washington and submitted to the President his report recommending approval of Westmoreland's request for troops.[24]

That same day, Ho Chi Minh vowed that the war would last another 20 years or longer if necessary to achieve victory.[25]

President Johnson, however, apparently had already made up his mind about Westmoreland's request. On July 16, four days before the report was submitted, the President, after receiving cables from McNamara and his party reporting on their talks in Saigon, told McNamara's deputy, Cyrus Vance, (according to the text of a cable drafted late that day), that it was his "current intention" to approve the request. Then, after a meeting at the White House of McGeorge Bundy, Vance and William Bundy at 11:30 a.m. on July 17, a top secret, "literally eyes only" (meaning that it could only be opened by the recipient) back channel cable was sent by Vance to McNamara informing him of the conversation. "After the message was sent," William Bundy said later, "we sat down to prepare detailed plans. For practical purposes, the policy decision now seemed clear." [26] "By the time of Secretary McNamara's return, the question was less 'what' than 'how.' " [27]

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[24] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, "Recommendations of Additional Deployments to Vietnam," July 20, 1965.

[25] *New York Times*, July 20, 1965.

This is the text of Vance's cable:[28]

> Yesterday I met three times with highest authority [President Johnson] on actions associated with 34 battalion plan. In summary, he stated:
>
> 1. It is his current intention to proceed with 34 battalion plan.
> 2. It is impossible for him to submit supplementary budget request of more than $300-400 million to the Congress before next January.
> 3. If a larger request is made to the Congress, he believes this will kill domestic legislative program.
> 4. We should be prepared to explain to the Congress that we have adequate authority and funds, by use of deficit financing, $750 million supplemental and possible small current supplemental, to finance recommended operations until next January, when we will be able to come up with clear and precise figures as to what is required.
>
> I asked highest authority whether request for legislation authorizing call-up of Reserves [29] and extension of tours of duty would be acceptable in the light of his comments concerning domestic program, and he stated that it would.
>
> I pointed out that we would have great difficulties with Senator Stennis concerning this course of action. He said that he recognized that we would but we would just have to bull it through. He requested that I talk to Senator Russell on Monday, and I will do so.
>
> I have talked to Charlie [Charles J.] Hitch [Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller)] and Paul [R.] Ignatius [Assistant Secretary of Defense (Installations and Logistics)] about this, and the three of us will determine whether we can achieve

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[26] William Bundy MS, ch. 27, p. 24.

In a letter to Professor Fred Greenstein of Princeton University on Mar. 10, 1988, after Greenstein had sent him the newly-released text of the cable, Vance said: "You ask me: 'Should scholars conclude that Mr. Johnson had given his associates the go-ahead in his statement to you, or would you say that he meant to convey some continuing uncertainty about what he would finally decide?' I believe it was the latter, namely that there was continuing uncertainty about his final decision. The President was conveying to me his 'current intention,' but not his final decision, which would have to await Secretary McNamara's recommmendations and the views of the Congressional leaders, particularly the view of Senator Russell."

The author is grateful to Mr. Vance and to Professor Greenstein for permission to quote from this letter.

[27] U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers), "Notes Concerning the President's Major Decisions on Vietnam of February and July 1965." prepared in 1969.

[28] U.S. Department of Defense, Files of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, DTG 172042Z Washington to Saigon. This document, which was declassified in 1988 at the author's request, is not in the files of the Johnson Library.

The information about the 11:30 a.m. meeting is from William Bundy's "1963-1965 Diary Highlights," U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 (William Bundy Papers).

[29] This was in reference to the question of calling up Reserve and National Guard forces, which McNamara recommended in the report on his trip. Under the law at that time, the President could either ask Congress for authority to do so, or, by declaring a national emergency, he could order as many as one million forces to active duty for two years without action by Congress. In a memorandum on July 22, 1965 to McGeorge Bundy, Henry Rowen, Assistant Director of the Bureau of the Budget, advised that congressional authorization was preferable: "This method of calling up Reserves seems far and away the best. It assures Congressional participation and support and avoids the problems involved in declaring a new national emergency." Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

what highest authority desires. I have also talked to McGeorge Bundy but do not plan to mention it to anyone else. . . .

On July 19, Vance reported that he had talked with Senator Russell, who apparently said he would support a one-year call-up of Reserves and National Guard forces.[30] Presumably, Vance also talked to Senator Stennis.

In his report to the President on July 20, McNamara said that, "The situation in South Vietnam [language taken from McNaughton's July 13 draft—Yarmolinsky was again the chief drafting officer] is worse than a year ago (when it was worse than a year before that.) After a few months of stalemate, the tempo of the war has quickened. A hard VC push is now on to dismember the nation and to maul the army. . . . Without further outside help, the ARVN is faced with successive tactical reverses, loss of key communication and population centers particularly in the highlands, piecemeal destruction of ARVN units, attrition of RVNAF will to fight, and loss of civilian confidence. Early commitment of additional US/third-country forces in sufficient quantity, in general reserve and offensive roles, should stave off GVN defeat."

"There are no signs," McNamara's report stated, "that we have throttled the inflow of supplies for the VC or can throttle the flow while their materiel needs are as low as they are. . . . Nor have our air attacks in North Vietnam produced tangible evidence of willingness on the part of Hanoi to come to the conference table in a reasonable mood. The DRV/VC seem to believe that South Vietnam is on the run and near collapse; they show no signs of settling for less than a complete take-over." Greater military pressure combined with political action, however, would ". . . stave off defeat in the short run and offer a good chance of producing a favorable settlement in the longer run. . . ." It would "imply a commitment to see a fighting war clear through at considerable cost in casualties and materiel," as well as making it more difficult and costly to withdraw U.S. forces before reaching a successful conclusion.

"Our object in Vietnam," the report said, "is to create conditions for a favorable outcome by demonstrating to the VC/DRV that the odds are against their winning. We want to create these conditions, if possible, without causing the war to expand into one with China or the Soviet Union and in a way which preserves support of the American people and, hopefully, of our allies and friends." "In my view," McNamara added, "a 'favorable outcome' . . . has nine fundamental elements":[31]

> a. VC stop attacks and drastically reduce incidents of terror and sabotage.
>
> b. DRV reduces infiltration to a trickle, with some reasonably reliable method of our obtaining confirmation of this fact.
>
> c. US/GVN stop bombing of North Vietnam.
>
> d. GVN stays independent (hopefully pro-US, but possibly genuinely neutral).
>
> e. GVN exercises governmental functions over substantially all of South Vietnam.
>
> f. Communists remain quiescent in Laos and Thailand.

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[30] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy, handwritten notes, July 19, 1965.

[31] These were listed above in the "Win" package of para. E of the July 13 draft report.

g. DRV withdraws PAVN [Peoples' Army of Vietnam] forces and other North Vietnamese infiltration (not regroupees) from South Vietnam.

h. VC/NLF transform from a military to a purely political organization.

i. US combat forces (not advisors or AID) withdraw.

"A favorable outcome," he said, "could include also arrangements regarding elections, relations between North and South Vietnam, participation in peace-keeping by international forces, membership for North and South Vietnam in the UN, and so on."

"We do not need now to address the question whether ultimately we would settle for something less than the nine fundamentals," McNamara added, "because deployments of the forces recommended is prerequisite to the achievement of *any* acceptable settlement, and a decision can be made later, when bargaining becomes a reality, whether to compromise in any particular." (emphasis in original)

In light of the situation in Vietnam, and based on these objectives, the report said that there were three options for the United States:

a. Cut our losses and withdraw under the best conditions that can be arranged—almost certainly conditions humiliating the United States and very damaging to our future effectiveness on the world scene.

b. Continue at about the present level, with the U.S. forces limited to say 75,000, holding on and playing for the breaks—a course of action which, because our position would grow weaker, almost certainly would confront us later with a choice between withdrawal and an emergency expansion of forces, perhaps too late to do any good.

c. Expand promptly and substantially the U.S. military pressure against the Viet Cong in the South and maintain the military pressure against the North Vietnamese in the North while launching a vigorous effort on the political side [32] to lay the groundwork for a favorable outcome by clarifying our objectives and establishing channels of communication. This alternative would stave off defeat in the short run and offer a good chance of producing a favorable settlement in the longer run; at the same time it would imply a commitment to see a fighting war clear through at considerable cost in casualties and material and would make any later decision to withdraw even more difficult and even more costly than would be the case today.

McNamara recommended option C, and proposed that Westmoreland's request for 100,000 more U.S. troops be approved, which, with the 75,000 already there, would provide 175,000 (34 maneuver battalions) U.S. troops. There would also be 10 maneuver battalions from other countries (a total of 44 maneuver battalions), including 9 from Korea. (If the Korean forces were not made available promptly, 9 more U.S. battalions would be deployed, a total of 43 U.S. maneuver battalions and 200,000 U.S. troops). He said that 100,000 additional troops—27 maneuver battalions and supporting forces—raising the total to 61 (or alternatively, 70) U.S. maneuver battalions might be necessary in early 1966, as well as possible additional forces thereafter, depending upon developments.

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[32] At this point, the report contained this footnote: "Ambassador Lodge states 'any further initiative by us now [before we are strong] would simply harden the Communist resolve not to stop fighting.' Ambassadors Taylor and Johnson would maintain discreet contacts with the Soviets, but otherwise agree with Ambassador Lodge."

McNamara recommended that the President ask Congress to authorize the call-up of 235,000 Reservists and National Guard troops and increase regular U.S. forces by 375,000, so that by mid-1966 there would be 600,000 additional troops "as protection against contingencies." In addition, he recommended that Johnson request a supplemental appropriation (he did not specify the amount) to cover the added costs of the war, and said that another supplemental might be necessary later in the fiscal year.

With respect to ROLLING THUNDER, McNamara recommended that attacks be increased from 2,500 a month to 4,000 or more, and that there should be a "severe reprisal should the VC or DRV commit a particularly damaging or horrendous act. . . ." After increasing U.S. ground forces and bombing of the North, McNamara added, the U.S. could consider, as part of a diplomatic initiative, a six-eight week bombing pause.

The increased military role of the United States in the war, the report said, might boost the casualty rate for Americans to 500 a month by the end of 1965, but according to the report, ". . . the United States public will support the course of action because it is a sensible and courageous military-political program designed and likely to bring about a success in Vietnam."

The report added:

> It should be recognized, however, that success against the larger, more conventional, VC/PAVN forces could merely drive the VC back into the trees and back to their 1960-64 pattern—a pattern against which US troops and aircraft would be of limited value but with which the GVN, with our help, could cope. The questions here would be whether the VC could maintain morale after such a set-back, and whether the South Vietnamese would have the will to hang on through another cycle. It should be recognized also that, even in "success," it is not obvious how we will be able to disengage our forces from Vietnam. It is unlikely that a formal agreement good enough for the purpose could possibly be negotiated—because the arrangement can reflect little more than the power situation. A fairly large number of U.S. (or perhaps international) forces may be required to stay in Vietnam.

McNamara explained, based on a plan he had received from Westmoreland, that U.S., South Vietnamese and other "friendly" forces would operate according to a three- phase concept. Phase I, "strategic defense," would be to reverse the losing trend by the end of 1965. The additional 100,000 U.S. troops (over the 75,000 already deployed as of July 1965) would be deployed during this phase. In Phase II, "strategic offense," during the first six months of 1966 offensive operations would be resumed in high priority areas "necessary to destroy enemy forces, and reinstitution of rural construction activities." During Phase II, 100,000 more troops (24 maneuver battalions) would be deployed, bringing U.S. forces to 275,000 (or

300,000 in the absence of Korean troops). Phase III was described as follows: "If the enemy persisted, a period of a year to a year and a half [Phase III] following Phase II would be required for the defeat and destruction of the remaining enemy forces and base areas." Additional forces might be needed during Phase III. Westmoreland's plan called for winning the war in two or two and a half years.

The report noted that the "Government to VC ratio over-all is now only a little better than 3-to-1, and in combat battalions little better than 1.5-to-1," and it stated, as has been mentioned earlier,that the additional forces which were being recommended for deployment, while "too small to make a significant difference in the traditional 10-1 government-guerrilla formula," would "make a significant difference in the kind of war which seems to be evolving in Vietnam—a 'Third Stage' or conventional war in which it is easier to identify, locate and attack the enemy." (In his report, McNamara did not specify what the ratio would be after additional troops were deployed.)

U.S. strategy for winning Phase I of the war, according to McNamara, "will be to take the offensive—to take and hold the initiative." This was his explanation (which was quite similar to that of the Goodpaster Report):

> The concept of tactical operations will be to exploit the offensive, with the objects of putting the VC/DRV battalion forces out of operation and of destroying their morale. The South Vietnamese, US and third-country forces, by aggressive exploitation of superior military forces, are to gain and hold the initiative—keeping the enemy at a disadvantage, maintaining a tempo such as to deny them time to recuperate or regain their balance, and pressing the fight against VC/DRV main force units in South Vietnam to run them to ground and destroy them. The operations should combine to compel the VC/DRV to fight at a higher and more sustained intensity with resulting higher logistical consumption and, at the same time, to limit his capability to resupply forces in combat at that scale by attacking his LOC [lines of communication]. The concept assumes vigorous prosecution of the air and sea anti-infiltration campaign and includes increased use of air in-country, including B-52s, night and day to harass VC in their havens. Following destruction of the VC main force units, the South Vietnamese must reinstate the Program of Rural Reconstruction as an antidote to the continuing VC campaign of terror and subversion.

The report did not discuss the question of deploying U.S. forces to the highlands and South Vietnamese forces to the delta and coastal plains.

McNamara's report also suggested several actions that could be taken in South Vietnam, including more progress in pacifying rural areas and a more effective and stable government in Saigon.

In addition to these recommendations, the report commented on "expanded political moves": [33]

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[33] These should be compared with those stated in the July 13 draft report—see above.

> Together with the above military moves, we should take political initiatives in order to lay a groundwork for a favorable political settlement by clarifying our objectives and establishing channels of communications. At the same time as we are taking steps to turn the tide in South Vietnam, we would make quiet moves through diplomatic channels (a) to open a dialogue with Moscow and Hanoi, and perhaps the VC, looking first toward disabusing them of any misconceptions as to our goals and second toward laying the groundwork for a settlement when the time is ripe; (b) to keep the Soviet Union from deepening its military involvement and support of North Vietnam and from generating crises elsewhere in the world until the time when settlement can be achieved; and (c) to cement support for US policy by the US public, allies and friends, and to keep international opposition at a manageable level. Our efforts may be unproductive until the tide begins to turn, but nevertheless they should be made.

"The South Vietnamese under one government or another," the report said, "will probably see the thing through. . . ." Lodge, judging by a footnote in the report, was even more frank about the irrelevancy of the South Vietnamese Government: "Ambassador Lodge points out that we may face a neutralist government at some time in the future and that in those circumstances the US should be prepared to carry on alone."

The report concluded: "The overall evaluation is that the course of action recommended in this memorandum—if the military and political moves are properly integrated and executed with continuing vigor and visible determination—stands a good chance of achieving an acceptable outcome within a reasonable time in Vietnam." "Never again while he was Secretary of Defense," the *Pentagon Papers* commented, "would McNamara make so optimistic a statement about Vietnam—except in public." [34]

Before leaving Saigon, McNamara had circulated the draft of his report and several of the members of his party drafted their own comments. Lodge, who was about to replace Taylor, submitted this memorandum to the President: [35]

> 1. I concur in the specific recommendations contained in Paragraph 5 [troop deployment] of Secretary McNamara's Report.
>
> 2. Continue all activities against North Viet-Nam.
>
> 3. Make strong points of the great seaports, notably Danang, Cam Ranh, and Saigon and, possibly, some places in the interior which can be readily maintained.
>
> 4. From these strong points the Vietnamese, with our advice and help, should conduct their program of pacification by means of a true Revolution for a New Life, on which a start has been attempted in the Hop Tac area [the rural development program around Saigon]. With the ARVN and police providing security, this should be an affirmative, highly political oil spot procedure, never striving for flashy and misleading sta-

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[34] *PP*, Gravel ed., vol. IV, p. 27.

[35] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Memorandum to the President from H. C. Lodge, July 20, 1967, Saigon.

tistics, always seeking solid and *durable* gains, however small, however slowly achieved. My intended program of stationing a few carefully selected political coordinators in a few provinces, working directly under the Embassy, attempts to create such a procedure. Once we and the South Vietnamese learn how to do this, the oil spots will connect with each other and the Viet Cong military manpower pool will inevitably shrink. Neither bombing nor conventional ground warfare will reach the terrorist working as an individual and in small groups—and they are the backbone of Viet Cong recruiting.

5. If the opportunity offers, US troops can fight the pitched battle with large units of the Viet Cong—as they attack our strong points, and possibly, in other places where they can be identified and where the circumstances are such that the outlook for destroying them is propitious. There may be good chances to open and secure roads. But U.S. troops should not be committed to prolonged "search sweeps" in the jungle or to being permanently stationed in the jungle.

6. No one can establish schedules or make predictions. As President Johnson has often well said of the American pioneers—from Plymouth Rock to the Far West—we must endure, and, as we endure, we will learn and opportunities will come.

7. But our grandchildren will not live to see the day that a united China does not probe in Southeast Asia.

Leonard Unger, who represented the State Department on the trip, agreed that Westmoreland's request for troops should be approved, but in a memorandum to McNamara in Saigon on July 20, he said he thought that greater U.S. participation would lead to a truce or armistice, as in Korea, rather than a "settlement." ". . . I have little confidence that the South Vietnamese regime which would follow a settlement could for long resist take-over by the Communists. While in the past this might be a chance we would be willing to take, once we have made substantial deployments of US combat forces in South Vietnam and taken the casualties that will inevitably follow, I do not believe the American public would permit a settlement that would risk our having made all that effort in vain." [36]

A cease-fire or armistice, Unger said, would occur when the "large-scale VC/PAVN military threat in South Vietnam appeared to be under control. The principal changes in the situation which this would bring about would be an end to our bombing of North Vietnam and probably the withdrawal of PAVN units from the South and possibly an end to infiltration of cadres and munitions for the VC. In due course there could probably be successive withdrawal of U.S. and other third country combat forces, but I would expect the need for a substantial number of such forces to continue for some time."

Before the group left Saigon, Chester Cooper also sent McNamara a memorandum on July 20 in which he said, "The contemplated U.S. force build-up will, hopefully stop the erosion of security, at some later point push the VC back into the jungle, and, sooner or later, make them more amenable to a political settlement." [37] But he said there were some "worrisome problems":

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[36] Same location.

> A. Will the President be able to settle for something less than a clear cut military victory (or at least something that can be creditably passed off as one) after committing forces of the contemplated scale? Would a much larger force which provided a greater chance for a "military victory" be easier for him to live with than the contemplated force which might break the back of the main force, but not necessarily cut deeply into the VC capability for substantial guerrilla activity?
>
> B. Should the report address the question of dealing with the guerrilla problem through a major political-economic psy war effort? I have a queasy feeling that, thus far, the kind and level of planning that has gone into the non-military sphere is vastly inadequate and would suggest that this problem be attacked as soon as possible with the kind of priority and drive that has been given to military planning.
>
> C. Should the report explicitly state that the forces contemplated may well turn out to be significantly less than what may have to be committed not only in Viet-Nam but elsewhere, as we raise the ante here?
>
> D. After the commitment of even the contemplated level of U.S. forces, will we be able to settle for a political settlement involving anything less than the VC's turning in their suits altogether.

Congressional Attitudes Toward the Deployment of Additional Forces

There were two specific recommendations by McNamara on which congressional action could be required: calling up 235,000 Reserve and National Guard troops (unless this were done under a declaration of emergency), and increasing funds for the war through a supplemental appropriation. In addition, of course, there was the question of a tax increase. In the end, the President decided not to ask Congress for authority to call up the Reserves, partly because this would necessitate a debate which might be divisive, both with respect to the U.S. role in Vietnam and his Great Society legislation. There was also some concern that Congress might, as it did when it was asked to authorize the use of Reserves in the 1962 Berlin crisis, limit the call-up to one year, and that a request for the renewal of that authority at the end of the first year might provide an opening for another congressional debate on the war.

There was also a general preference in Congress, especially among the leaders of the Armed Services Committees, for increasing draft calls rather than calling up the Reserves or the National Guard.

There was also the question of seeking additional funding for the war, based on the Defense Department's estimate that the 44 battalion increase would add at least $7-8 billion to the military budget requirements for Vietnam for fiscal year 1966. Senator Stennis, acting chairman of the Armed Services Committee, apparently was quite receptive to a request for additional funds. In June 1965, when the Department of Defense appropriation bill was being debated in the House, and when, as was mentioned earlier, McNamara had argued that no additional funds were needed at that time, Stennis had questioned that position, and had warned that more funds would be needed and should be requested.

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[37] Same location.

When he was asked in July about a request for new funds, Stennis took the position that the 1966 Defense Department appropriations bill, which was still being considered by the Senate Appropriations Committee, should be increased by $1 billion, and that a request for other funds needed for the war for fiscal year 1966 could then be submitted early in 1966.

The President balked at asking for $1 billion, and on July 19 he had McGeorge Bundy prepare a brief memorandum stating the reasons for opposing such a request.[38] In early August, however, after approving the 44 battalion request, he asked Congress for $1.7 billion for the war (the "Southeast Asia Emergency Fund," mentioned above).[39]

With respect to the question of additional taxes to pay for the increased cost of the war, there is very little available information as to the way in which this was handled, but apparently in the draft of his report McNamara recommended a tax increase, was rebuffed by the President, and removed the recommendation from his final July 21 report. As the story has been told, McNamara took the position that without a tax increase the costs of the war would create a government budgetary deficit, which would then stimulate inflation. This was said to have been Johnson's reply:[40]

> You know so goddamned much about it, you go up there and you get it and you come back down here and give me the names of the people who will vote for it. Obviously you don't know anything about politics. I'll tell you what's going to happen. We'll put it forward; they are going to turn it down. But in the course of the debate they'll say: "You see, we've been telling you so. You can't have guns and butter, and we're going to have guns."

During this period in mid-July 1965 there were public statements by several Senators who were concerned about the impending decision to send more troops. On July 16, the day McNamara left for Saigon, Senator Morse again attacked the Johnson administration for not seeking a declaration of war and for further escalating the war.[41] "I say, in all respect," he declared, "that Goldwater could not possibly have moved further and faster than the President has moved in leading us into a war in Asia." The "sound and wise and justified theory that Americans should not fight Asians' war for them," which Morse said had been stressed by Johnson during the 1964 Presidential campaign, "has somehow been shoved completely out of the picture. . . . We are running the show. We are running the war. The responsibility and the interests at stake have become ours."

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[38] Same location.

[39] This request was approved by Congress with almost no debate. During Senate consideration of the Department of Defense appropriation bill the question was raised as to how much additional funding would be requested later in the fiscal year for the cost of the war during FY 1966. The reply from Saltonstall was that there would be a supplemental FY 1966 request in January 1966 for another $7-10 billion. *CR*, vol. 111, p. 21709.

[40] Confidential CRS Interview, Feb. 1, 1979.

[41] *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 17146-17152.

Morse lashed out again at the "reservationists" in the Senate who, when voting for the supplemental appropriations bill the previous May, had taken the position that they expected to be consulted further if additional troops were sent to Vietnam. "Of course they have not been consulted," he said, adding:

> I say to my colleagues in the Senate and to the President of the United States and his Cabinet that the American people, in due course of time, are going to be heard from expressing their deep resentment in opposition to what I consider to be a failure on the part of this administration to follow the procedures of the Constitution of the United States in regard to making war. . . .
>
> The American people must come to grips with the ugly crisis that faces us. The American people must stop passing the buck to their Government. The American people must recognize the fact that it is their ultimate responsibility to decree what the American foreign policy shall be, and that it is not the responsibility of the President of the United States, for under our constitutional system he is but the administrator of a people's foreign policy.

On July 21, Senator Mansfield made one last public appeal, obviously a gesture at that stage, for an international conference to negotiate an end to the war. Referring to McNamara's trip, he said it appeared that the U.S. would increase its military role, and that the war "may go on for 4 or 5 or even 10 years. . . ." "We are in," he said, "not for a summer of pain and difficulty but for an ordeal of indefinite duration and increasing sacrifice which will persist until the problem can be resolved at the conference table." [42]

On July 23, Mansfield followed up this statement by sending another private memorandum to the President in which he again urged negotiations, and warned that increasing U.S. troops to 200,000-300,000 would be only the beginning: "In my opinion, a figure of one million, if this situation continues to develop as it has, could be considered conservative." [43]

Mansfield also reiterated his previous position on the question of another congressional resolution:

> I do not know whether or not you intend to send a resolution to the Congress, but if you do, in my opinion, there will be more opposition than heretofore, more votes against such a resolution and more difficulty ahead. The divisiveness, moreover, is likely to affect other aspects of the Great Society programs.

On July 22, Senator Javits spoke with obvious regret about the turn of events, and said once again that he thought it was "a great mistake for the President not to come back to Congress for a new mandate and to let the people, through Congress, determine, with the President, what should be the limits, if any, to be placed upon this large scale and portentous involvement in the struggle in Vietnam."[44]

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[42] *Ibid.*, pp. 17797-17798.

[43] Johnson Library, NSF Name File, Mansfield.

Javits inserted in the *Congressional Record* his exchange of letters with Fulbright on the matter of consideration by the Foreign Relations Committee of the Javits-Randolph resolution to provide new authorization, and he said:

> . . . we have done all we can. The door is closed on any expression of congressional opinion arrived at in the way that our Constitution in my judgment, expects us to debate, to hear debate on, and to consider this very grave responsibility.
>
> The President, as I view it now, proposes to carry on alone and not to ask Congress, and, through Congress, the people to proceed with him.
>
> When it appears that the entire matter will be placed on a different plateau, involving the greatest portentousness and the greatest danger, and affecting very profoundly the future of the United States, I would not be true to myself as a Senator if I did not protest against this action. I believe it unwise.
>
> While I naturally and loyally support our President's actions, I must, at one and the same time, protest what I consider to be a very unwise course of procedure in not again submitting this matter to Congress.

On July 27, Senator McGovern warned of a "major war involving thousands of American casualties, the expenditure of billions of dollars, vast bloodshed and destruction for the Vietnamese people, and an uncertain outcome."[45] He also warned of the domestic political consequences of such a war:

> President Johnson has a legislative and administrative record that is virtually unprecedented in American history. It ought to be the pride of our country and the envy of the world. But unless members of the foreign policy establishment who do not have to face the electorate quit making Vietnam appear as the top concern of the administration, they will create grave political hazards for a great President and his supporters in the Congress—to say nothing of weakening our country in the eyes of the world.

McGovern recommended that U.S. forces in Vietnam be consolidated in enclaves in the cities and coastal regions rather than being used against guerrillas in towns and rural areas and in the process killing thousands of innocent civilians. Senator Clark agreed.[46]

The mood and attitudes of Congress during the final week before the President's announcement on July 28 were aptly described by the *New York Times'* political reporter, E. W. Kenworthy, in a story on July 25: "At a time when President Johnson is saying almost daily that 'three Presidents have made the pledge for this nation' to defend South Vietnam against the Communists and that 'our national honor is at stake, our word is at stake,' a majority of Congress still sees our commitment in the limited and conditional terms set forth by President Kennedy. But these Representatives and Senators are not saying so in floor speeches. Nor are they expressing their views for publication in conversation with reporters."

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[44] *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 17842-17843.

[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 18308-18310.

[46] *Ibid.*, pp. 18311-18312. See also Morse's speech, pp. 18316-18320.

Kenworthy said there were three groups of opinion in the Senate. The first group, the most vocal critics of administration policy, consisted of Morse and Gruening. A second group, which included Mansfield, Fulbright, Robert Kennedy, Javits, and Aiken, was also critical of existing policy, but was more temperate. A third group, including Dirksen, Tower, and Dodd, fully supported the President. "But the large majority of Senators," Kenworthy said, "has remained publicly silent through the deepening crisis and almost certainly will not break this silence during the short-lived debate that may take place over the forces in Vietnam." "Representative of these Senators, and most influential of them," Kenworthy added, "is Senator Richard B. Russell of Georgia, chairman of the Armed Services Committee."

According to Kenworthy, these were the reasons for lack of Senate debate on the question of sending larger numbers of U.S. forces:

> First, they are extremely reluctant to create the impression of disunity when American soldiers are fighting and dying.
>
> Second, they realize in fairness that President Johnson, like President Kennedy, was bequeathed this burden by the Eisenhower Administration, that Mr. Johnson's problem has been made almost insoluble by the ineffectiveness of the Saigon Government on the one hand and the escalation by the Vietcong and North Vietnam on the other; that he has tried to get negotiations going under international auspices, which might provide some defensible exit, and that the Communists have imposed the unacceptable condition of prior withdrawal of U.S. forces.
>
> Third, if challenged these Senators have no alternative to offer. They wish the United States had never gone into Vietnam; they would like to get out, even at the cost of a political compromise amounting to defeat, but they will not advocate military withdrawal under fire.
>
> Fourth, some of the Senators hesitate even to criticize the bombing, which they regard as not only "counter-productive" but dangerous, because they fear the cry of "appeasement of Communism" will be raised against them. They have noted the attacks made in some sections of the press on Senators Morse and Gruening.

Kenworthy added: "All this, as one Senate leader said last week, has created 'an attitude of fatalism' among Senators who are deeply concerned about the President's apparent decision to 'take the war over.' There seems to be a general feeling that events have taken control, that the President has made his decision, and that discussion would be without effect. At the same time a few Senators have a gnawing feeling that the greatest deliberative body in the world is abdicating responsibility."

Presidential Meetings, July 21-27, 1965

During the last week of July 1965, the President and his advisers met daily or twice daily to conduct a final review before taking action on Westmoreland's request. Although it was generally assumed that McNamara's report represented the consensus on which the decision would be based, and though the President apparently had already decided that he was going to approve Westmoreland's request, that week of activity was intended to serve a number of purposes.[47] Having chosen to provide greater assistance to South Vietnam by increasing the role of the U.S. in the war, but wanting to protest his domestic programs, the President needed to devise and get agreement on a plan designed to achieve both objectives while also serving the other national and international interests of the United States. The President, McGeorge Bundy said later, ". . . had known when he sent McNamara to Saigon that the purpose was to build a consensus on what was needed to be done to turn the tide—not to cover a retreat. Within that purpose he was glad to have all sorts of options . . . [discussed], but his own priority was to get agreement, at the lowest level of intensity he could, on a course that would meet the present need in Vietnam and not derail his legislative calendar." [48] (At the time, two major Great Society bills were moving through Congress: the bill to establish the Medicare program, and a bill to double appropriations for the anti-poverty program which had been authorized in 1964.) This required, among other things, decisions on the politically sensitive questions of a Reserve and National Guard call-up, supplemental appropriations, and whether to raise taxes to pay for the additional costs of a larger war.[49]

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[47] For Lyndon Johnson's own description of the factors involved in his July 28, 1965 decision, see *The Vantage Point*, pp. 151-153.

Recent studies by Berman, *Planning a Tragedy*, and Kahin, *Intervention*, discuss the factors involved in the making of the July 28 decision, including the question of the intent and significance of the final week of meetings. Berman concludes that President Johnson "used the advisory process to legitimize the decision to political elites and the general public," and that the questions Johnson asked at the meetings were "staged for purposes of consensus-building . . . to legitimize a previously selected option by creating the illusion that other views were being considered" (pp. 152, 106 and 112). He also contends (p. 6) that Johnson "*may* have staged the July deliberations as a smokescreen for buying time to ensure passage of domestic legislation through Congress." (emphasis in original)

Kahin, on the other hand, portrays Johnson as being "clearly reluctant" to approve Westmoreland's request and says that he was "prevailed upon" to do so "only after more than five weeks of vigorous and extended debate, during which almost all of his advisers came to support the increase. . . ." (p. 348) He argues that while Johnson may have been inclined to accept McNamara's recommendations, he had not made up his mind prior to the meetings of July 21-28 (p. 366). He says that the Vance cable of July 17 should be interpreted as indicating that Johnson had approved the development of a plan for deployment rather than actually approving deployment. (See p. 527, fn. 21.)

President Johnson and some of his associates and supporters claimed that the July 21-28 meetings involved "searching discussions" (a term frequently used) of every point of view, and the careful weighing of alternatives. See, for example, *The Vantage Point*, p. 146; Jack Valenti, *A Very Human President* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975), p. 358; Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, p. 399.

Both during and after the July 21-28 discussions, the President's press secretary, Bill Moyers, denied that a decision on Westmoreland's request had been made prior to the completion of those discussions. At a press conference on July 24, for example, Moyers said that reports to this effect were "absolutely and categorically untrue. . . . The President and his advisers feel that for the Government to make decisions, and then erect a facade of post-facto deliberation, would not only be capriciousness of the worst kind, but would be hypocritical as well." *New York Times*, July 25, 1965.

In a discussion on Aug. 4, 1965, George Ball told James Reston of the *New York Times*, when Reston expressed doubts about the scope and seriousness of the review conducted by the President during July 21-27, that it was the most comprehensive and intensive since the Cuban missile crisis, and that "all participants were in full accord with the program finally approved." U.S. Department of State, Lot File 70 D 217, "Press Reports During Period July 31-Aug. 6, 1965."

[48] Letter from McGeorge Bundy cited in Berman, *Planning a Tragedy*, p. 145.

In order to gain support for the decision from within the executive branch, as well as from Congress and the public, it was also desirable to create confidence in and satisfaction with the process by which the decision was being made, and broad acceptance of the plan which was finally approved. There should be enough time for adequate consideration, but not so much time as to delay the decision unduly or to give an appearance of division or indecision. (Pressure from the media was also a factor in favor of acting promptly.) A review of three-four days seemed appropriate. As McGeorge Bundy told the President in a memorandum on July 21,[50] "it makes sense for your Government to deliberate for three days on an issue of this magnitude."

In addition, it was important to give various major interests the opportunity to participate in the review. Thus, affected agencies and departments of the executive branch needed to be included in the discussions, and suitable arrangements made for communicating with Congress.

There were also external factors that had to be considered, including, in addition to U.S. relations with South Vietnam, the relationship of the United States with its allies as well as with the Soviet Union, China, and North Vietnam. The goal was to make clear the intentions of the United States, especially its determination to uphold its commitments, while avoiding the impression of a crisis which might alarm other countries and create greater solidarity between North Vietnam and the U.S.S.R. and China. Particular care needed to be taken with the U.S.S.R., both because of the importance of relations between the two major powers, and because of the constructive role which the U.S. thought the U.S.S.R. might play, as it had in 1954, in influencing the North Vietnamese to bring the war to a conclusion compatible with U.S. interests.

With respect to the role of Congress, the President had already decided against seeking a new resolution, after advice from Majority Leader Mansfield and probably other Members of Congress, as well as his own advisers, that this could produce a divisive debate, especially in the Senate, and legal advice from the Attorney General and the Secretary of State that the President had the power and the authority under the Constitution to deploy U.S. forces for combat outside the United States without any authorization or approval (except for funds) by Congress. He had also been advised that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution constituted congressional authorization, although several administration officials, including the Legal Adviser of the State Department, took the position that, according to the legislative history of that resolution, Congress did not intend for it to be used as authorization for a war of the size being contemplated in July 1965.

Left unresolved, however, was what role, if any, Congress should play in the process of making the decision to enter the war with large-scale ground forces. One question was whether, in addition to conferring with individual Members, especially those in key positions of power over the resources required to wage war (particularly the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees), the elected leaders and other Members of Congress should be included in any of the White House meetings. McGeorge Bundy anticipated that the President might want to do so. In a memorandum on July 20 asking him to indicate which persons he wanted at the first meeting on July 21, Bundy stated: "I assume that you will not want any members of the Congress [to attend White House meetings on Vietnam] until after you have heard this [McNamara] first report."[51]

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[49] In notes prepared in 1969 (cited above), William Bundy said: "I had the distinct impression from a series of White House meetings that the President had made up his mind in late June that he would do what had to be done. But this still left open the question of doing it in the most effective political and Congressional fashion."

[50] Cited p. 405 below.

If leaders and other Members of Congress were not included in any of the meetings, what role should they play? When and how should the President confer with them? What steps, if any, should be taken to confer with the chairman and others on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who had been critical of administration policy towards Vietnam and had continued to insist that Congress should be involved in the making of a decision to go to war?

How should Congress and the public be told about the decision? Should the President speak before a joint session of Congress or send Congress a special message announcing the decision? Or should he make the announcement through the news media, either as a televised address to the nation (a "fireside chat") or in a televised news conference. If he held a televised press conference, when should it be held and what should be its format?

After the President's speech or statement, should a presentation be made to the relevant committees of Congress?

What other steps should be taken to encourage public support for the decision and for the expanded role of the U.S. in the war? Among other things, should the White House help to organize a public group for this purpose?

Plans for the actions to be taken during the week of July 21-28 were being laid in Washington while McNamara and his group were in Vietnam. On Saturday, July 17, after the President had told Vance he was going to approve Westmoreland's request, William Bundy prepared a "Checklist of Actions" covering every major aspect:[52]

1. Possible Timetable
2. Congressional Actions
3. The UN
4. Action with respect to the American Public
5. Notification to Key Countries

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[51] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President, "Meeting on Vietnam at 11:30 Tomorrow," July 20, 1965. There was some precedent. Senate majority and minority leaders and the Speaker and minority leader of the House had attended the NSC meetings on Feb. 6, 7 and 8, 1965 at which the decision was made to bomb North Vietnam in retaliation for the Pleiku attack. There were important differences in the two situations, however. In the case of Pleiku, there had been a sudden surprise attack, and the immediate question was whether the U.S. should retaliate. (During the meeting on February 8, after McGeorge Bundy reported on his trip, there was some discussion of U.S. policy toward Vietnam, but the President did not ask for or encourage a discussion of U.S. policy.) The July 21-27 meetings, on the other hand, were held for the purpose of discussing whether to enter the war with large-scale ground forces, and having chosen to limit congressional participation when he decided not to seek congressional action on a resolution, the President apparently did not assume that it was desirable or appropriate for congressional leaders to be included in those meetings.

[52] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

This was the "Possible Timetable":

> Secretary McNamara will return on the 21st. There will be Executive Branch discussions leading to a final Presidential decision, perhaps the 26th. The President might make his major statement to a joint session of the Congress on the 28th. DOD [Department of Defense] is doing the first draft of a Presidential statement and will send it privately to Secretary McNamara for his personal review during his return trip.[53]

"Congressional Actions" were to consist of these categories of action: "Consultation with Leadership," "Committee Presentation," and "Preparation of Speeches." Under the first of these, in addition to the President's own conversations, the memorandum proposed that Vance should see Senator Russell and Representative Rivers, chairmen of the two Armed Services Committees, followed by other consultations by McNamara.

Under "Committee Presentation," according to the checklist, "It is now anticipated that the presentation will be made to the Armed Services Committees separately, but probably with the Foreign Relations and Foreign Affairs Committees also participating. This would probably start the day after the President's statement." Both Rusk and McNamara would make major statements of the administration's case.

In addition, the Defense Department would prepare legislation for calling up the Reserves and extending tours of duty, and was also "examining the question of supplementary budget requests."

Speeches would also be prepared for use by administration supporters in Congress, with a speech-writing group to be organized in the State Department under the supervision of a Presidential assistant, either Horace Busby or Douglass Cater.

The checklist also discussed the notification of U.S. allies. With respect to the United Nations, it stated, "We do not believe that we should take the issue to the UN for action at this time." A statement which could be made to the Security Council was being prepared, however, and the Secretary General would be informed about the U.S. decision "and our unchanged objectives" prior to the President's statement.[54]

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[53] For reference to the location of the DOD draft see p. 437, fn. 140, below.

[54] Harlan Cleveland, Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs, questioned whether William Bundy's checklist proposals were necessary, and said he thought they could lead to "too much of a crisis atmosphere." U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Memorandum from Cleveland for the Secretary, July 22, 1965, Subject: "Vietnam." The public, Cleveland said, was "already substantially conditioned to expect an increase in our force level to 200,000 men. . . ." "The American people have looked hard at two major policy changes—the decision to bomb North Vietnam and the decision to move from an advisory to a combatant role. A doubling of our forces in Vietnam does not, it seems to me, need to be played as a third major policy change."

Moreover, Cleveland said, "Most of the governments in the world are now accustomed to the idea that we mean it in Vietnam, and that we are going to be there, if necessary, until Hell freezes over. We do not need a big show to make this point evident. . . ."

"In short," he said, "I wonder whether the whole proposed procedure does not risk (a) frightening the world unnecessarily, (b) forcing the Russians to do something dramatic in response, (c) bringing to the surface domestic opposition that is not now active, and (d) convincing too many people at home and abroad that this is a new escalation step, taken, this time, at the deliberate initiative of the United States."

Cleveland, whose bureau handled U.S. representation at the United Nations, was also opposed to a speech to the Security Council, which, he said, if done at the time of the U.S. military buildup, "would show that we think of this buildup as a third major step in an escalation policy and would strike most observers as gimmickry." Instead, he suggested that the U.S. should send a

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The checklist referred briefly to "Action with respect to the American Public." "The White House," it stated, "is urgently considering the formation of a citizen's committee." In addition, the State Department was "urgently" considering whether to release a statement of questions and answers that might be useful in public debate. "Alternatively, this material could readily form part of a defensive debating kit assembled for Congressional use."

The idea of a citizen's committee had been suggested to the President by Douglass Cater, one of his assistants, in a memorandum on July 10, 1965.[55] Cater said he had discussed the idea with John W. Gardner, president of the Carnegie Corporation who had just been appointed Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Morris Leibman, a prominent Chicago lawyer and one of the Wise Men who supported U.S. involvement in the war and had active relationships with the White House,[56] and Walter Heller, an economist at the University of Minnesota who had been chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers during the Kennedy administration. Cater reported that, "None of them felt that present criticism represents anything more than a marginal group of malcontents. Gardner is confident that a poll devoted solely to intellectuals would show as high popularity as among any other group." "But all three," Cater added, "are concerned that as troubles in Vietnam drag on and deepen, there could be an adverse effect on your leadership." They did not think that the President needed to do more in the way of explaining U.S. policy in Vietnam. Instead, they suggested that a public committee be established "to speak out in support of the Administration against both the appeasers and those who would take rash risks."

The President returned the memorandum to Cater with a handwritten note saying, "Yes—good."

The idea was then discussed on July 14 by Cater, McGeorge Bundy and Busby. They mentioned it to McNamara, who, they later reported to the President, was "enthusiastic about getting this going right away." [57] In a memorandum to the President reporting these developments, Cater suggested seven possible nominees as chairman.[58] Apparently, however, the President preferred

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written report to the Security Council. As will be seen, however, in meetings with the President on July 25 and 26, Arthur Goldberg, the President's choice to replace Adlai Stevenson at the U.N., took the position that the U.S. should take the initiative in the U.N.

[55] Johnson Library, White House Aides Files, Office Files of Douglass Cater.

[56] Even though he held no government post, Leibman subsequently participated—the only non-government person to do so—in a small White House public relations group which sought to promote the administration's Vietnam policy. He was present at the first meeting of the group on Aug. 4, 1965, which was chaired by Cater, and attended by Cooper and Gordon Chase of the NSC staff and Greenfield and Jorden from the State Department. Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Cater memorandum for the record of the meeting on Aug. 4, 1965. In a weekly memorandum to McGeorge Bundy on August 9, ("The Week in Asia," NSF Name File, Cooper), which was also signed by Thomson and Ropa, Cooper mentioned the August 4 meeting and said, "Cooper intends to exploit Leibman for the American Friends of Vietnam." In the following weekly report on August 16 (same location), which was also signed by Thomson and Ropa, Cooper said that he had arranged for Morris Leibman to buy and distribute 4,000 copies of the first issue of a new journal being published by the American Friends of Vietnam as part of its program to promote government policy.

[57] Johnson Library, WHCF EX FG 431, Memorandum from Cater to the President, July 14, 1965.

[58] These were:

J. Irwin Miller—Chairman of the Board of the Cummins Engine Corporation of Indiana, known for his active involvement in public affairs

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Arthur Dean, one of the Wise Men, who was not on the list. On July 22, Cater sent the President a memorandum saying that he had reviewed with Dean, who had accepted the post, the establishment and membership of the group.[59] The President's response, in a handwritten note on Cater's memorandum, was: "Go full steam. Hurry! Put [on] a few good publishers—Palmer Hoyt [*Denver Post*] et al."

On Monday, July 19, at 8:25 p.m., McGeorge Bundy sent the President a memorandum on "Vietnam Planning at Close of Business, July 19," in which he said that McNamara was expected to arrive in Washington at 8 a.m. Wednesday, July 21, and that, "We expect you will want to see him that morning—or possibly that afternoon after he has had time to take a reading with Rusk and Vance. Meanwhile Vance has gone ahead with planning for the Reserve call-up, the extension of tours [of duty], and the increased draft calls which are foreshadowed in the military planning." [60]

He continued:

> . . . the timing of the message to Congress is really the D-Day for the whole operation. If McNamara reports to you Wednesday, you probably do not wish to give an appearance of great haste in reaching a decision, and for that reason I would recommend against going to the Hill [Capitol Hill] before the first of the week [Monday, July 26]. But a delay beyond Monday would seem to me to create too wide a gap between McNamara's return and the point of decision. If you agree, we might tentatively plan that you would see McNamara Wednesday [July 21], and talk with the Congressional Leadership either Friday [July 23] or Saturday [July 24] to get ready for a formal message to Congress on Monday [July 26].

"At the same time," Bundy added, "it is increasingly urgent that we get ahead with planning for public support. Doug Cater is ready to go ahead with plans to provide speech materials to friendly Senators and Congressmen, and everyone is ready to go ahead with the Citizens Committee as soon as you give the signal."

At 8:15 p.m. that same evening (July 19), Bundy also sent the President, at his request, a memorandum, "The Reasons for Avoiding a Billion Dollar Appropriation in Vietnam," directed at responding to Senator Stennis' call (see above) for adding $1 billion to help pay for the additional forces:[61]

> 1. It would be a belligerent challenge to the Soviets at a time when it is important to do only those things which we have to do (like calling reserves).

Robert Kintner—President of the National Broadcasting Company

Milton Eisenhower—President of the Johns Hopkins University and brother of former President Dwight Eisenhower

Kingman Brewster—President of Yale University

Robert B. Anderson—a Texan who was a New York financier; former Secretary of the Treasury under President Eisenhower

Otis Chandler—Editor and Publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*

Thomas Vail—Editor and Publisher of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*

In his memorandum, Cater said that he, McGeorge Bundy, and Busby preferred Irwin Miller, with Kintner as their second choice.

[59] Johnson Library, WHCF EX FG 431.

[60] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[61] Same location.

2. It would stir talk about controls over the economy and inflation—at a time when controls are not needed and inflation is not that kind of a problem.

3. It would create the false impression that we have to have guns, not butter—and would help the enemies of the president's domestic legislative program.

4. It would play into the hands of the Soviets at Geneva, because they could argue that it was a flagrant break of the policy of "mutual example" on defense budgets.

5. It is not needed—because there are other ways of financing our full effort in Vietnam for the rest of the calendar year at least.

The President returned the memorandum to Bundy with instructions to rewrite it, eliminating the third item. On July 23, Bundy sent the President the revised version.[62]

On Tuesday, July 20, at a Tuesday Luncheon from 1:10 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., the President discussed, among other things, the plans for the following week with Rusk, Vance (sitting in for McNamara), McGeorge Bundy and Bill Moyers, but no notes were kept on the meeting.[63]

July 21

McNamara and his party arrived in Washington as scheduled, and on Wednesday, July 21, from 10:40 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., he and several members of his party met at the White House with other Presidential advisers to discuss the group's findings prior to meeting with the President at 11:30 a.m. Present were: Rusk, McNamara, Ball, Vance, McGeorge Bundy, Raborn, General Wheeler, William Bundy, Lodge, McNaughton, Unger (William Bundy's deputy), Richard Helms (Raborn's deputy for Covert Operations), USIA Director Rowan, and Cooper, Moyers, Valenti and Busby from the NSC and White House staffs.

When the members of the group arrived for the meeting, McNamara passed around copies of a top secret memorandum from the JCS in which the Chiefs argued that only the prompt use of large numbers of U.S. forces could save South Vietnam.[64]

At this preliminary session, McNamara summarized his report. Rusk asked several questions about the capabilities of the South Vietnamese to contribute to their own defense. McNamara replied that he doubted whether the South Vietnamese could raise the forces necessary to counter the increasing capabilities of the Communists. He said that the U.S. Mission in Saigon was reported to be more optimistic than he was on this point, but that the Mission also felt it would be "prudent to take a pessimistic and skeptical view of the abilities of the GVN—'a non- government'—to push forward with any major program." [65]

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[62] Same location.

[63] For McGeorge Bundy's agenda for the luncheon, see Johnson Library, NSF Files of McGeorge Bundy, Luncheons with the President.

[64] Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern*, p. 399. It is not known what the memorandum contained or whether any copies still exist.

[65] Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File, Memorandum for the Record, "Meetings on Vietnam, July 21, 1965," dated July 22, 1965, prepared by Chester Cooper. Presidential Assistant Jack Valenti also took notes at the two meetings on July 21. His notes, which do not differ substantially

Continued

After further discussion of the military situation, Rusk stated that if McNamara's report was accepted, "a scenario for Congressional and public action would be desirable." Among the advisers, "There was a general feeling that the President would have to move ahead on statements to Congress and the public early in the week of July 26." Ball commented, "It is one thing to ready the country for this decision and another to face the realities of the decision. We can't allow the country to wake up one morning and find heavy casualties. We need to be damn serious with the American public."[66] He "pointed out the need to paint a 'sombre picture' and to dispel any idea that the post-monsoon period would see us over the hump." McNamara commented, "we should make clear to the public that American troops were already in combat."

At 11:30 a.m., the President joined the group, and McNamara summarized the "action recommendations" in his report. One of these was that in order to support an additional 200,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam (100,000 immediately, and 100,000 more at the beginning of 1966), the deployment of which would reduce the number of active-duty forces in the United States which were designated as Strategic Reserves, action should be taken in 1966 to reconstitute the Strategic Reserves by calling up 235,000 from the Ready Reserves (those not on active duty) and National Guard, as well as increasing the number of regular, active-duty forces (Army, Navy and Marines and Air Force) by 375,000. This would provide, McNamara said, as he had explained in his report, an additional 600,000 men to protect against contingencies. The President replied that when the time came to call up the Reserves "he wanted a full statement of the situation in Vietnam which required additional troops." He continued:

> What consequences are likely to flow from a call-up? (The McNamara paper gives no sense of victory, but rather of continuing stalemate.) Why can't we get more third country troops? What are the alternatives available to us? We could tell the GVN that we are leaving, but is this an option we wish to pursue at this time? If we pull out of Vietnam now, will we have to call up more troops and suffer more casualties at some later date? We have explored all initiatives for a peaceful settlement, to an extent, perhaps, that we already look weak. In

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from those of Cooper, are in the same location. Except where indicated, all references and quotations used here for the two meetings on July 21 are from Cooper's notes.

There were two additional meetings on July 22 to discuss the McNamara report, one on July 23, none on July 24, one on July 25, and two on July 26. There are Valenti notes of the meetings of July 22, 25 and 26, which were opened in 1985 and are in the Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File. In his book, *A Very Human President*, (pp. 318-363), Valenti includes his notes of the two meetings on July 21 and the first of the two meetings on July 22. Although the versions of these which appear in his book are almost identical to those in the Meeting Notes File, some changes were made, primarily stylistic.

Of the two existing accounts of the meetings of July 21-26, Berman's *Planning a Tragedy* was published before the Valenti notes were released, and Kahin's *Intervention* went to press before the notes were released for the second meeting on July 22 and the two meetings on July 26. Kahin is in error in referring (p. 367) to three sets of notes for the two meetings on July 21. There were only two, Cooper's and Valenti's. The unsigned NSC notes to which Kahin refers were Valenti's.

McGeorge Bundy also took brief notes on the meetings on July 22 which are in his papers in the Johnson Library. There are also McGeorge Bundy notes for the meeting on July 25 which are too cursory to be useful, as well as notes dated July 26 which are either notes of a meeting with the President or of a conversation between Bundy and the President.

[66] This comment by Ball is from Valenti's notes.

short, what are our present options, why do we select the recommended number of troops rather than more or fewer? What will this increased force accomplish?

McNamara replied that the Communists were expanding their control of the countryside, and that the cities were increasingly more isolated. "Unless the U.S. steps in with additional forces, the VC will push the GVN into small enclaves. . . ."

The President said that the mission of U.S. forces "should be as limited as we dare make it." General Wheeler agreed, but stressed the importance of "offensive operations to seek out and fight VC main force units." CIA Director Raborn said, however, that in the opinion of the CIA the Communists would avoid major confrontations with U.S. forces, and would continue using guerrilla tactics. General Wheeler responded that because of harassment by U.S. forces the Communists "will have to 'come out and fight'. . . ," to which George Ball replied that the Communists might not "accommodate" the U.S. by engaging in more conventional warfare. McNamara said that if they did not this would enable the South Vietnamese Government to proceed with pacification, and that, in any event, "U.S forces can engage guerrillas as well as the main force units."

The President then asked if anyone disagreed with the recommendations in McNamara's report. Ball, the only member of the group who expressed any doubts, responded that the United States was, ". . . engaged on 'a very perilous voyage.' He had grave apprehensions about our ability to beat the VC because of the nature of the terrain, the softness of the political situation and other factors." He added, however, that he "would go along with the McNamara report."

The President said he was "aware of the dangers, but wondered about other courses open to us."

Ball said it would not be easy to "cut our losses," and that the U.S. would run the risk of Communist control of Southeast Asia. But he added that these losses would be short-term, and that "we should weigh the costs of cutting our losses now as opposed to later." The pressure to become involved in a larger war, he added, would be "irresistible."

The President replied that Ball had "clearly identified the dangers before us, but [he] did not get the impression that Mr. Ball opposed the McNamara course." He said he, too, wanted to "minimize the dangers of this enterprise but felt that he had not other choice."

President: What other road can I go?

Ball: Take what precautions we can—take losses—let their government fall apart—negotiate—probable take over by Communists. This is disagreeable, I know.

President: Can we make a case for this—discuss it fully?

Ball: We have discussed it. I have had my day in court.

President: I don't think we have made a full commitment. You have pointed out the danger, but you haven't proposed an alternative course. We haven't always been right. We have no mortgage on victory.

> I feel we have very little alternative to what we are doing.[67]

Rusk agreed that alternatives should be considered, but he said that if the U.S. had sent 50,000 troops to Vietnam in 1961 it might have deterred North Vietnam, implying that the additional troops proposed by the McNamara report might have a similar effect.

Lodge again took the position, as he had in the McNamara report, that if necessary the U.S. should act unilaterally in South Vietnam: "'We shouldn't take the Government too seriously.' If the area is important to us, we must do what is necessary regardless of the Government."

The President asked Ball if he could offer another course of action. Ball said he could offer "the least bad of two courses [the other being McNamara's]. What I would present is a course that is costly, but can be limited to short term costs." The President: "Then, let's meet at 2:30 this afternoon to discuss Ball's proposals. Now let Bob tell us why we need to risk these 600,000 lives." [68]

McNamara responded that the Communists "had the capability to push ARVN out of positions they now control with a consequent inevitable takeover of the Government. He would not recommend that we hold our forces at the present level. We should increase our forces or get out." "We limit it to another 100,000 because Vietnam can't absorb any more." [69]

General Wheeler said that the South Vietnamese Army had been weakened by casualties and desertions. With increased U.S. forces, "we will have proportionately less casualties."

> President: What makes you think if we put in another 100,000 men Ho Chi Minh won't put in another 100,000?
>
> Wheeler: This means greater bodies of men—which will allow us to cream them.
>
> President: What are the chances of more NVN men coming?
>
> Wheeler: 50-50 chance. He would be foolhardy to put 1/4 of his forces in SVN. It would expose him too greatly in NVN.[70]

Admiral Raborn commented that the CIA estimated that of approximately 250,000 in the North Vietnamese Regular Army, 20,000-25,000 would be sent to the South by the end of 1965.

Later that day (July 21), Chester Cooper sent McGeorge Bundy a memorandum in which, noting that the President had asked for alternatives, he proposed this "ancillary" approach: [71]

> This morning's discussion noted two possible military outcomes resulting from a substantial increase in U.S. forces:
>
> > a. The VC main forces will be forced by U.S. forces into reverting to guerrilla warfare.
> >
> > b. The VC main forces will choose not to confront our units head-on and voluntarily revert to guerrilla actions.
>
> Either way, it would appear that we and the GVN will be faced with the problem of guerrilla rather than positional warfare. The fact that this may mean that the VC cannot achieve a military victory offers small comfort; neither we nor the

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[67] This exchange is from Valenti's notes.

[68] Quotations in this paragraph are from Valenti's notes.

[69] This sentence is from Valenti's notes.

[70] This exchange is from Valenti's notes.

[71] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

> GVN have as yet demonstrated that we can win this kind of war. The idea of leaving "pacification" duties to the ARVN (while we defend our bases and come to the relief of besieged ARVN units) will not, in itself do the trick. In effect, the VC will be doing what it is best at.

This was Cooper's proposal:

> What is needed, if we are successfully to cope with the VC under the circumstances of widespread guerrilla warfare, is a political-economic-psychwar program as carefully developed and as massive in its way as the military effort envisaged in the McNamara proposal. In fact, it may well be that many of the U.S. forces would be redundant under those circumstances and our hopes for "a favorable outcome" will be dependent on the success of our non-military efforts.
>
> In brief, I would recommend that if the McNamara proposals are accepted, there be developed simultaneously a major non-military program to deal with the guerrilla phase of the war. In fact, I do not see how the McNamara approach can succeed without such accompanying non-military planning.[72]

When the President and his advisers, who were joined by Clark Clifford, met again that afternoon (July 21) at 2:45 p.m., Ball summarized his alternative proposal. He doubted ". . . the ability of Westerners successfully to wage war on the terrain and in the political atmosphere of Vietnam. If the war could be won in a year with reasonable casualties, he would not be so concerned. But he feels that it will take at least two years and the fact that we will have put in so much U.S. manpower with no early definitive results, would be a sign of U.S. weakness in the eyes of the world." The "least harmful way to cut our losses," Ball added, "is to let the GVN decide it doesn't want us." "Therefore, put such proposals to SVN Government that they can't accept, then it would move into neutralization position—and I have no illusions [but] that after we were asked to leave, SVN would be under Hanoi control." [73]

The President agreed that the situation was serious. "He regretted that we were embroiled in Vietnam. But we *are* there. He believes the Vietnamese people want us, despite the frequent changes of government." (emphasis in original) The President said he was concerned, however, about the stability of the South Vietnamese Government, as well as with the question of whether westerners could effectively wage war in the rice paddies of Vietnam. He was also concerned about the effects of Ball's proposals on U.S. credibility in the rest of Asia:

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[72] In a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy on Aug. 2, 1965, (Johnson Library, NSF Name File, Cooper) Chester Cooper further explained this proposal:

". . . a failure to bring about some effective political expression of South Vietnamese anti-Communist nationalism could render sterile their (and our) expenditure of blood and treasure. . . ." ". . . the greatest single weakness of the U.S. Government in dealing with developing nations is our weakness in doing this kind of [political] job on a systematic high-priority basis." He went on to suggest that such a program should include the strengthening of the military's view of their responsibility to aid in building a political system, but not the exercise of direct power; and the creation of a "modern revolutionary party" embracing all major groups in the society, which could "focus the authentic nationalism . . . into an instrument capable of coping with Communist organizational techniques. . . ." In addition, there should be a political program which would aid in forging such a consensus. This would involve the initiation of a five-year plan and the development of institutions, such as trade unions and cooperatives, "which permit effective participation by the people in their own development." In setting up such a program, Cooper concluded, it was essential ". . . that the whole of the U.S. Government, from the President down, accept this kind of effort as equivalent in priority to what we do about Vietnam in the military and diplomatic fields. . . ."

[73] This sentence is from Valenti's notes.

> President: Wouldn't all these countries say Uncle Sam is a paper tiger—wouldn't we lose credibility breaking the word of three presidents—if we set it up as you proposed. It would seem to be an irreparable blow. But I gather you don't think so.
>
> Ball: The worse blow would be that the mightiest power in the world is unable to defeat guerrillas.
>
> President: Then you are not basically troubled by what the world would say about pulling out?
>
> Ball: If we were actively helping a country with a stable, viable government it would be a vastly different story. Western Europeans look at us as if we got ourselves into [*sic*] an imprudent fashion.
>
> President: But I believe that these people are trying to fight. They're like Republicans who try to stay in power, but don't stay there long. (aside—amid laughter—"excuse me, Cabot [Lodge].") [74]

McGeorge Bundy agreed with McNamara's proposals, and said he disagreed with Ball's analysis. Moreover, he said, there would be time to reconsider U.S. policy "after we have given it a good try." Ball objected, saying that the larger the U.S. commitment the harder it would be to change or reverse course. Bundy retorted: ". . . the kind of shift in U.S. policy suggested by Mr. Ball would be 'disastrous.' He [Bundy] would rather maintain our present commitment and 'waffle through' than withdraw. The country [U.S.] is in the mood to accept grim news."

Rusk asserted that the ". . . nature and integrity of the U.S. commitment was fundamental. It makes the U.S. stance with the USSR credible. It would be dangerous if the Communist leadership became convinced that we will not see this through." He said he was more optimistic than some about the outcome of the war. "The effects of our force increment will be to force the VC into guerrilla activity, to remove the capability of the other side to use major forces against the GVN."

McNamara also disagreed with Ball, and agreed with Rusk, as did Lodge and Unger.

General Wheeler said that it was ". . . unreasonable to expect to 'win' in a year regardless of the number of US troops involved. We might start to reverse the unfavorable trend in a year and make definite progress in three years." He thought U.S. forces could wage war effectively in Southeast Asia, and he added, "This is the first 'war of National Liberation': if we walk out of this one, we will just have to face others."

At 8:00 p.m. that day (Wednesday, July 21), McGeorge Bundy sent the President a memorandum, "Timing of Decisions and Actions in Vietnam," [75]

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[74] This exchange is from Valenti's notes. Henry Cabot Lodge, the newly-designated U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam, was a well-known Republican.

[75] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

> Bill Moyers tells me we got through Wednesday with the White House press well enough, but I think the probability is that we will have rising pressure in the coming days. For this reason, I myself continue to think that the right time for your message—or a fireside chat—or both at once is Monday [July 26]. We really cannot get an orderly and well-considered decision made before that, but I doubt if we can hold the fort any longer.
>
> . . . I think it makes sense for your Government to deliberate for three days on an issue of this magnitude. On this basis, it seems to me that on Friday, or Saturday morning, we might announce that you are calling the [congressional] Leadership to a meeting Sunday afternoon or Monday morning, and expect to go to Congress Monday noon or Monday evening.

On July 21, the President also received two memoranda from Horace Busby. Before the first meeting that day, which he attended, Busby sent the President a memorandum on his impressions and reactions to the discussions of Vietnam which had occurred to that point.[76] "Out of the discussions," Busby said, "these thoughts occur":

> 1. Someone mentioned the Viet Cong are "creatures of habit." So are we. Your advisers have "the habit" of downplaying our role in Vietnam. Hence, a tendency is present to insist that whatever is done is, actually, only an extension of all we have been doing. This may be self-deceptive.
>
> 2. What we are considering is not whether we continue a war—but whether we start (or have started) a new war. The 1954-64 premises, principles and pretexts no longer apply. This is no longer South Vietnam's war. We are no longer advisers. The stakes are no longer South Vietnam's. The war is ours. We are participants. The stakes are ours—and the West's.
>
> 3. The two great needs are self-assessment—and clearer definition of objectives.
>
>> a. *On Self-assessment:* It seems dangerous to insist, passively or vocally that the U.S. has not made mistaken judgments since 1961. We must have done so. It would be constructive to insist upon critical self-analysis to determine at least the *pattern* of our errors.
>>
>> b. *Objectives:* Clearly, the acceptable objectives in Vietnam—acceptable in proportion to U.S. sacrifice required—are world-size, not country-size. It is hard to define an acceptable objective in Vietnam: To seek one there leads inevitably to Ball's conclusion and thesis. The objectives—the acceptable objectives—must be in terms of Southeast Asia, the Pacific or even the broad-East-West relationship. Rusk sees it in this dimension—and his logic prevails over Ball's. We do need, I believe, to equate our purposes in Southeast Asia with objectives broader and greater than the ones country itself. Only that will justify what lies ahead.

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[76] Johnson Library, White House Aides Files, Office Files of Horace Busby.

> 4. On troop support from other nations: we may be thinking too narrowly on this. For many reasons, such support will not be forthcoming. One reason is that our oldest ally already is more involved—relative to strength—than we: i.e., Great Britain. If we can broaden the Nation's perspective and information by defining regional rather than one-country objectives, it would be helpful. Our efforts in Vietnam and Britain's efforts in Malaysia should be packaged together for public consumption. The more relevant line of action among allies would be to stop their trade with North Vietnam rather than pester them for troops.
>
> 5. Clearly, the fixation about working with the Vietnam government is a holdover from the ten-year effort to downplay our role there. Basically, we are there not solely because of Vietnam's invitation, but because of our obligations under SEATO. Our fidelity to a Treaty—not to a changeable government—deserves more emphasis abroad and at home. It also offers a predicate for the U.S. to run its own effort rather than stand by seeking permission from a government-that-is-not-a-government.
>
> 6. Overall, your initiative in insisting that everyone 'think' is very satisfying, useful and stimulating. Defense, as well as State, should be encouraged to reexamine its own premises and past performance—or so it seems to me.

After the morning meeting on July 21, during which the question of the press' treatment of the war was discussed, Busby sent the President another memorandum, "Vietnam News—What's Missing?" in which, referring to that discussion, he said that although the emphasis in news stories on U.S. bombing and other military actions was "stark, jarring, out of proportion and out of perspective," this could not be overcome by stories about U.S. desires to promote economic development. The fault, he said, "lies much less with the news media than with the American Government."

> . . . the American Government today needs to be talking more—much, much more—about the why of our actions. This is needed because the first essential of leadership in times of national challenge and great undertakings is to explain to the people why their government—and they themselves—must do what is required. No American family—no West European family—really wants to sacrifice a son so that the Mekong River can be developed or the Southeast Asian rice yield can be increased. Such goals are of interest to our people—but not of self-interest. *We must state and re-state* and state again America's self-interest and the Free World's self-interest in the outcome of Vietnam. Public speeches which do this will "top" and considerably subordinate the daily accounts of U.S. small-scale military actions in Southeast Asia. (emphasis in original)

Busby said that, ". . . one failing of our treatment of Vietnam has been the attempt to de-emphasize it. The direction of U.S. effort has been too closely held, too much centered on too few people: i.e., Rusk, McNamara, Bundy . . . if more is to be asked of the people, they must know more of what is in the minds and visions of their leaders." He suggested, therefore, that top civilian and military leaders should make "high-impact" speeches supporting U.S. policy, which would also give the public a better "feel" for the character and quality of their leaders. In addition, the administration should organize speeches by prominent Americans from various walks of life. "Such speeches will not make top headlines in Washington—or New York. But they will serve effectively out over the country—and we need to be mindful that headlines here are seldom the same as headlines the other side of the Appalachian mountains."

In a summary of his comments, Busby said:

> What is needed now is a rallying of the sense of national purpose—and understanding of what is at stake for the U.S. and the Free World in Southeast Asia. We need not chart talks, not calm and collected predictions of U.S. power and its potential impact, but something more like Churchill—or FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt]. Also, we need more voices than the President's raised to rally the public to this cause. There must be depth in what is said—and breadth in the array of American leaders saying it. Such talks need not be militaristic. There is no cause for "blood, sweat, toil and tears" type speeches. But we do need to tell ourselves what the principles are, what our purposes are and what the stakes are in the enterprise now forced upon us in a distant region of the world.

July 22

At noon on July 22, the President met with the JCS and officials from the Department of Defense.[77] Present were McNamara, Vance, McGeorge Bundy, General Wheeler (Chairman of the JCS) and the other members of the JCS—Gen. Harold K. Johnson (Army Chief of Staff), Gen. John P. McConnell (Air Force Chief of Staff), Adm. David L. McDonald (Chief of Naval Operations), and Gen. Wallace M. Greene, Jr. (Commandant of the Marine Corps)—together with the Service Secretaries, Eugene M. Zuckert, Secretary of the Air Force; Paul H. Nitze, Secretary of the Navy; Stanley R. Resor, Secretary of the Army; and Harold Brown, who had been nominated to succeed Zuckert. Clark Clifford also attended. There was no one present from the State Department.

The President began the meeting by asking the JCS for comments on alternative courses of action. He said there were, as McNamara's report had stated, three options:

> 1. Leave the country—with as little loss as possible—the "bugging out" approach.
> 2. Maintain present force and lose slowly.
> 3. Add 100,000 men—recognizing that may not be enough—and adding more next year.

The disadvantages of the third option, he added, were "risk of escalation, casualties will be high—may be a long war without victory."

All of the Chiefs replied that it would be a mistake to withdraw. As Marine General Greene put it, "One, the national security stake. Matter of time before we go in some place else. Two, pledge we have made. Three, prestige before the rest of the world." Admiral McDonald, Chief of Naval Operations, said, "If we walk out of Vietnam, the whole world will question our word. We don't have much choice." He said the U.S. should "Get out now or pour in more men."

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[77] Notes on this meeting, the source of the quotations used here, were taken by Valenti and are in the Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File. In addition, there are brief handwritten notes by McGeorge Bundy in his papers in the Johnson Library.

The Service Secretaries took a similar position. Even Secretary of the Navy Nitze, who had told McNamara in late June after returning from a trip to Vietnam that he thought the war was lost, and that if he were President he would not make the "absolutely immense effort" required to save South Vietnam,[78] supported the Westmoreland request, saying that the odds would be 60-40 in favor of success if the request was approved. The President asked him if he would put in more troops than Westmoreland had requested, and Nitze said he would add, as McNamara's plan envisioned, another 100,000 in January 1966.

Harold Brown, incoming Secretary of the Air Force, said, "It seems that all of our alternatives are dark," but added that he agreed with McNamara's recommendations. The President asked him, "Are we starting something that in two or three years we can't finish?" Brown replied, "It is costly to us to strangle slowly, but chances of losing are less if we move in."

> President: Suppose we told Ky of requirements we need—he turns them down—and we have to get out and make our stand in Thailand.
>
> Brown: The Thais will go with the winner.
>
> President: If we didn't stop in Thailand where would we stop?

McNamara responded: "Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Burma surely affect Malaysia. In 2-3 years Communist domination would stop there, but ripple effect would be great—Japan, India. We would have to give up some bases. Ayub [Khan, Premier of Pakistan] would move closer to China. Greece, Turkey would move to neutralist position. Communist agitation would increase in Africa."

Secretary of the Army Resor also agreed with McNamara's proposals. "We can't go back on our commitment. Our allies are watching carefully."

All of the military leaders agreed that putting in more troops would "turn the tide." "But," the President noted, "you don't know if 100,000 will be enough to turn the tide." "What makes you conclude that if you don't know where we are going—and what will happen—we shouldn't pause and find this out?" Admiral McDonald replied, "Sooner or later we'll force them to the conference table."

"If we put in 100,000 won't they put in an equal number?" the President asked, adding, "Why wouldn't they . . . call on volunteers from China and Russia?" General Wheeler replied, "Weight of judgment is that NVN may reinforce their forces, but they can't match us on a buildup. From military view, we can handle, if we are determined to do so, China and NVN." Because the U.S. was "not proposing an invasion of North Vietnam," he thought China and Russia would "step up material and propaganda," and "have

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[78] See p. 330, fn. 136 above.

NVN introduce more regular troops." "Why," asked the President, "wouldn't NVN pour in more men? Also, call on volunteers from China and Russia." Wheeler replied: "First, they may decide they can't win by putting in forces they can't afford. At most would put in two more divisions. Beyond that they strip their country and invite a counter move on our part. Secondly, on volunteers—the one thing all NVN fear is Chinese. For them to invite Chinese volunteers is to invite China's taking over NVN."

Admiral McDonald said that the threat of more troops from North Vietnam could be countered by more bombing of the North. General McConnell, Air Force Chief of Staff, also advocated greater bombing of the North.

Has bombing been as successful as anticipated? the President asked. McConnell replied that it had been in the South, but less so in the North because "we are not striking the targets that hurt them."

Army Chief of Staff General Johnson, who had told the President in March 1965 that to win in Vietnam might take 500,000 men and five years,[79] (General Greene made the same prediction during the July 22 meeting) commented: "We are in a face-down." [80] "Least desirable alternative is getting out. Second least is doing what we are doing. Best is to get in and get the job done." The President replied: "But I don't know how we are going to get that job done. There are millions of Chinese. I think they are going to put their stack in. Is this the best place to do this? We don't have the allies we had in Korea."

> President: If we come in with hundreds of thousands of men and billions of dollars, won't this cause them to come in (China and Russia)?
>
> General Johnson: No, I don't think they will.
>
> President: MacArthur didn't think they would come in either.
>
> General Johnson: Yes, but this is not comparable to Korea. . . .
>
> President: But China has plenty of divisions to move in, don't they?
>
> General Johnson: Yes, they do.
>
> President: Then what would we do?
>
> General Johnson: (long silence) If so, we have another ball game.
>
> President: But I have to take into account they will.
>
> General Johnson: I would increase the buildup near NVN [North Vietnam]—and increase action in Korea.
>
> President: If they move in 31 divisions, what does it take on our part?
>
> McNamara: Under favorable conditions they could sustain 31 divisions and assuming Thais contributed forces, it would take 300,000 plus what we need to combat VC.
>
> President: But remember they're going to write stories about this like they did the Bay of Pigs—and about my advisers.

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[79] See p. 166 above.

[80] This sentence is from McGeorge Bundy's notes of the meeting.

That's why I want you to think very carefully about alternatives and plans.

If the Westmoreland request were approved, the President asked, what would the war cost? McNamara replied that it would cost $12 billion in 1966. What would be the effects on the U.S. economy? the President asked. McNamara replied: "It would not require wage and price controls in my judgment. Price index ought not go up more than one point or two."

"Doesn't it really mean," the President asked, "if we follow Westmoreland's requests we are in a new war—this is going off the diving board." McNamara: "This is a major change in US policy. We have relied on SVN to carry the brunt. Now we would be responsible for satisfactory military outcome."

"Do all of you think the Congress and the people," the President asked, "will go along with 600,000 people and billions of dollars 10,000 miles away?" (Earlier, General Greene had said that the public would support the effort, but that "They need to know the stakes. They understood pledge. They *don't* understand national interest.")[81] The only reply contained in the notes of the meeting was Secretary Resor's answer that the Gallup poll showed that the public supported the U.S. commitment, to which the President replied, "But if you make a commitment to jump off a building, and you find out how high it is, you may withdraw the commitment." According to Jack Valenti, who was taking notes on the meeting, "There was no answer from those in the room. . . ."[82]

The President continued: "I judge though that the big problem is one of national security. Is that right?" Here, Valenti's notes state that there was "murmured assent" from those present.

As the meeting ended, the President said, "Some Congressmen and Senators think we are going to be the most discredited people in the world. What Bundy will now tell you [McGeorge Bundy had been asked by the President to prepare a statement] is not his opinion nor mine (I haven't taken a position yet) but what we hear."

Bundy: Arguments we will face:

> For 10 years every step we have taken has been based on a previous failure. All we have done has failed and caused us to take another step which failed. As we get further into the bag, we get deeply bruised. Also, we have made excessive claims we haven't been able to realize.
>
> Also, after 20 years of warnings about war in Asia, we are now doing what MacArthur and others have warned against.
>
> > We are about to fight a war we can't fight and win, as the country we are trying to help is quitting.
>
> The failure on our own to fully realize what guerrilla war is like. We are sending conventional troops to do an unconventional job.
>
> > How long—how much. Can we take casualties over five years—aren't we talking about a military solution when the solution is political. Why can't we interdict

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[81] These quotes, beginning with the word "They," are from McGeorge Bundy's notes of the meeting.

[82] Valenti, *A Very Human President*, p. 350.

> better—why are our bombings so fruitless—why can't we blockade the coast—why can't we improve our intelligence—why can't we find the VC?

There was no discussion, but McNamara commented: "I think we can answer most of the questions posed."

The meeting on July 22 with Defense Department and military officials which had begun at noon ended at 2:15 p.m., and was followed by another meeting from 3:00 p.m. to 4:25 p.m. attended by the President, Rusk, McNamara, Ball, Vance, General Wheeler, and McGeorge Bundy. Clark Clifford was there, as were two of the "Wise Men," John J. McCloy and Arthur Dean. Moyers, Valenti, Cater and Busby were also present.

Earlier that day, the President had met briefly from 11:22 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. with Dean, who had agreed to become chairman of the new public committee on Vietnam, and, in addition to discussing the committee, he had reviewed with Dean the decision he was preparing to make to increase U.S. forces.[83]

In the afternoon meeting, Rusk, following McNamara's earlier comment, said that he, too, thought that the decision to send the troops requested by Westmoreland would be a change of policy: "The essence of policy is why we are there and what our war aims are. Moving from 75,000 to 185,000 men is a change of policy." He recommended that the matter be handled publicly in such a way as to avoid creating greater solidarity among the Communist countries concerned. He pointed out that a meeting of Communist countries, including the U.S.S.R. and China, was then taking place in Bucharest, Hungary, and said, "If we bring out our message of decision while the Bucharest meeting is going on it might bring them closer together." "Much is to be said," Rusk said, "for playing this low key." The President replied: "That one point needs to be stressed with Congressional leadership—also to explain with candor what we are doing to the American people. But when we do, we help the NVN [North Vietnamese] get their requests fulfilled by China and Russia." McNamara then said: "We can stay away from 'change of policy' but it is a change in risk and commitment. We need to explain why it is in our interest to do it." George Ball commented: "I hope we can avoid a debate on whether it is a change. We always lose on this," at which point McCloy said, "The country is looking to getting on with the war."

Bill Moyers, who had just taken over from George Reedy as White House press secretary, suggested a way of treating the issue, saying, "I don't think the press thinks we are going to change basic policy, but in the requirements to meet that policy." The President replied, "That's right and we ought to say it." (Subsequently, the President took the position in his discussion with the congressional leadership that the decision represented a response to the escalation of the war by the Communists, rather than a change in policy, and in answer to a question at the press conference at which he announced his decision he declared: "It does not imply any change in policy whatsoever.")

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[83] McGeorge Bundy attended the meeting and took brief notes which are in his papers in the Johnson Library.

On Sept. 8, 1965, the creation of the new group headed by Dean, the Committee for an Effective and Durable Peace in Asia, was announced. See *New York Times*, Sept. 9, 1965, and pt. IV of this study, forthcoming.

Rusk expressed concern about the effects of escalation on the Russians and the Chinese. ". . . a progressive step-up in bombing," he said, "increases risk of China intrusion." "But," the President replied, "the Chiefs say what we are doing in the North is not enough, only pin pricking them, just goosing them." Rusk: "But it is contradictory to do this when we can't find anybody in the South." (Presumably he was referring to the elusive nature of the enemy in a guerrilla warfare situation.) "Both China and the Soviets have pressure on them. A commitment in SVN is one thing, but a commitment to preserve another socialist state is quite another. This is a distinction we must bear in mind." Rusk continued:

> We have a 1 in 5 chance of Russia's staying out if we make commitment and if we bomb Hanoi. A commitment of large forces by us will lead to pressures on us to destroy Hanoi. This is the key point.

Following Rusk's remarks which, based on the notes of the meeting do not appear to have produced any comments or discussion, Arthur Dean, who fully supported the President's policy and the pending decision to send more troops, asked, "What do you do if the war drags on—with mounting casualties—where do we go. The people say if we are not doing what is necessary to end it, why don't we do what is necessary?" Again the notes on the meeting do not indicate that there was any discussion of this comment.

McCloy asked, "Would we be willing to take a Tito government or a VC victory?" McGeorge Bundy replied, "That's where our plan begins to unravel." He then shifted the subject to "how to keep a reasonable peace offensive going," which led the President to comment: "We have got to keep peace proposals going. It's like a prizefight. Our right is our military power, but our left must be our peace proposals. Every time you move troops forward, you move diplomats forward. I want this done. The generals want more and more—and go farther and farther. But State has to supply me with some, too." He added, however, "You'll never hold Fulbright, Mansfield, Church." [84]

Clark Clifford commented that he "didn't like the military attitude," and that he was "very bearish about the whole enterprise." "Can a military victory be won?" he asked. "What do you do if you win?" He urged the President to ". . . underplay—don't overplay decision he has evidently made. If overplayed, we're committed to win a general war. Talk about a lower set of calls. If you play it carefully you don't commit." [85]

Ball, who apparently had not known about Clifford's opposition, including his letter of May 17 to the President in which he opposed larger-scale U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, said in his memoirs that he "found support from an unexpected quarter," and that after the meeting he talked with Clifford and gave him copies of his memos on the subject.[86] Clifford told Ball, however, that he was not optimistic about changing the President's mind.

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[84] The quotation in this sentence is from McGeorge Bundy's notes of the meeting.

[85] These quotations, beginning with the words "didn't like," are from McGeorge Bundy's notes of the meeting.

July 23

On July 23, the President and his advisers received a prophetic Special National Intelligence Estimate, which had been requested by the State Department on July 15, forecasting the reactions of the Communists to the use of U.S. forces recommended in the July 20 McNamara report.[87] Its conclusion was that if the U.S. increased its forces the Communists would probably increase theirs (including 20,000-30,000 North Vietnamese Regulars by the end of 1965), and if the U.S. stepped up its bombing of the North, the North Vietnamese probably would ask the Russians for more assistance for air defense.

The SNIE also predicted that air attacks on selected military targets, possibly including SAM (surface-to-air missiles) sites in the Hanoi/Haiphong area would not "significantly injure the VC ability to persevere in the South or persuade the Hanoi government (DRV) that the price of persisting was unacceptably high." [88]

The report also concluded that in response to U.S. escalation the Communists might "avoid direct confrontation with U.S. forces and just peck away at them through harassing actions. By so doing, they might hope to demonstrate to the foreigner his own impotence in a Vietnamese war." If it looked as if Communist forces in the South were going to be defeated, the North Vietnamese would probably indicate an interest in negotiations.

Over the longer run, the report added, the strategy of the Communists would depend upon the course of the war and their estimates of South Vietnamese stability and the U.S. "will to persist." "They are predisposed," the report said, "to attach great weight to signs of disintegration in Saigon and to manifestations of domestic US opposition to Administration policies." Here, too, if "future military and political developments bring this conviction into serious doubt," the North Vietnamese might show an interest in negotiating.

The SNIE also concluded that the Chinese and Russians probably would not pose any major problems. "The Chinese would believe that the U.S. measures were sufficient only to postpone defeat while magnifying its eventual effect." Neither the Chinese nor the Russians would intervene with their own forces, although the Chinese might send service troops, and the Russians could be expected to increase their aid to the North Vietnamese as well as raising the level of their overall military budget.[89]

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[86] *The Past Has Another Pattern,* pp. 402-403. In Valenti's notes on the meeting there is no mention of these comments by Ball and Clifford.

[87] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, SNIE 10-9-65, "Communist and Free World Reactions to a Possible US Course of Action." The State Department memorandum requesting the report, which also stipulated the assumptions on which it was to be based, is in the Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, Rusk to the Director of the CIA, July 15, 1965.

[88] The SNIE noted that the Air Force representative "reserves his position" on this statement.

[89] On July 19, William Bundy wrote to Consul General Edward Rice in Hong Kong to ask his opinion as to whether a decision to increase U.S. forces in South Vietnam could cause the Chinese to take "some considerable actions." (A copy of Bundy's letter has not been located.) Rice

Continued

Finally, the SNIE appraised the effects of a low-key announcement by the U.S. of its troop increases:

> If the announcement were made in piecemeal fashion and with no more high level emphasis than necessary, the development of a crisis atmosphere might be mitigated. It is also possible that private assurances to the USSR that the US increase in overall military strength was directly solely toward the situation in Vietnam and not meant to improve the US position vis-a-vis the Soviets might soften the tone of the Soviet response. This avoidance of strident recriminations might in turn decrease somewhat the negative reaction of non-Communists countries. We believe, however, that the reactions of the Communist powers, particularly in the military field, would not be basically changed by the method of announcement. We also believe that there would still be increased apprehension among non-Communist countries.

That same day (Friday, July 23), there was another meeting from 12 noon until about 2:30 p.m. of the President and Rusk, McNamara, Wheeler, Ball, McGeorge Bundy, as well as Moyers and Busby from the White House staff.[90] (Valenti was having lunch with some foreign Ambassadors.) Unfortunately there were no notes taken, but the subject of the meeting appears to have been the nature of the plan to be announced by the President and the timing of the various moves involved. McNamara had drafted three alternative plans.[91]

> *Plan I*—Deploy 100,000 additional troops by November 1, 1965, a total of 175,000 (34 maneuver battalions), followed by another 100,000 (24 maneuver battalions) in 1966. Ask Congress to approve a Reserve call-up and to add $2 billion to the defense appropriations bill then pending in the Senate. In January 1966, request the remainder of the funds for FY 1966.
>
> *Plan II*—Deploy 100,000 additional troops by November 1, a total of 175,000, announce that 55,000 additional troops were being sent immediately (for a total of 133,000) and that others would be sent as required; then on September 1 announce that another 45,000 were being deployed. In addition, defer until September requests to Congress for more money and for the Reserve call-up. In 1966, send 100,000 more troops. (In his draft

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replied on August 13 (U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 [William Bundy Papers]) that the "level of tolerance" of the Chinese toward U.S. actions in South Vietnam was "quite high," and ". . . if our activities outside South Vietnam remained tolerable to the Chinese Communists, we think they most likely would not intervene even if our military activities within that country reduced the Viet Cong threat to the point which made the prospect of early Communist victory appear negligible." The Chinese would consider intervening, however, if they concluded that the U.S. was expanding its objectives beyond South Vietnam, particularly if there were a threat that the North Vietnamese regime could be destroyed. The bombing of North Vietnam, should it become such a threat, could lead to Chinese intervention, Rice said, and it was therefore, ". . . highly important that those at the decision-making level in the Government have a sound estimate of the risks and costs, and of what is and is not attainable through bombing. Otherwise we run a grave risk of bringing about Chinese Communist intervention through a program of bombing intended, in part at least, to attain objectives which it simply cannot achieve."

[90] Photographs of the participants which were taken during the meeting (located in the Johnson Library photographic collection) do not include General Wheeler, but they may have been taken while he was not in the room.

[91] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces. Each of the three plans was on a separate sheet of paper. On the copy of Plan III there is a notation, "7/24/65-Rev #1." The July 23 draft of Plan III is not in the file.

of the plan, McNamara warned, however, that Plan II could lead to criticism by Congress that it was not consulted or asked to approve such a major change in the war.)

Plan III—Deploy 100,000 more troops by November 1, a total of 175,000 (there was no recommendation, however, with respect to the timing of the announcement of this increase), and another 100,000 troops in 1966. There would be no Reserve call-up, instead, tours of duty would be extended and the active duty strength of the Services would be increased. Ask Congress to approve only $1 billion additional at that time, and in January 1966 request the remainder of the supplemental funding for FY 1966, (which McNamara estimated as approximately $6 billion). This plan was described as "A program to meet the schedule for recommended deployments to SVN while minimizing the actions which might induce Communist China or the Soviet Union to take initiatives they might not otherwise undertake."

McNamara preferred Plan I, and had so recommended to the President in his report.[92] The President, however, had decided that he should not call up the Reserves or make an immediate request to Congress for as much as $2 billion. For both domestic and international reasons, he also wanted to make a low-key announcement of his decision on Westmoreland's request, one which would make it appear that he was only approving the deployment of some of the forces requested by Westmoreland, and that the decision did not represent a change of policy or objective.

It apparently was at this meeting on July 23 that the President told McNamara that he was not going to approve Plan I, and that he preferred and would approve Plan III (as redrafted on July 24). McNamara's reaction is not known, but the President, not wanting to discuss the subject further, and anticipating that if he left the room by the usual route he would pass by McNamara, went out the door behind him onto a walkway where he told Busby, who had been motioned to follow him, "I think we may get a resignation out of this." [93]

That afternoon (July 23), shortly after the meeting at which McNamara's alternatives were discussed, Ball told a meeting of Assistant Secretaries of State that the President had "reached no clear-cut decisions on pending issues on Vietnam," but that he "was anxious to present the decisions which might be made in the next few days in a low-key manner in order (a) to avoid an abrupt challenge to the Communists, and (b) to avoid undue concern and excitement in the Congress and in domestic public opinion." [94]

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[92] McNamara, who had been told in Vance's cable on July 17 that the President could not ask for more than $300-400 million in new funds, was particularly concerned about appropriations. In a memorandum to the President on July 21, McGeorge Bundy said that McNamara ". . . thinks our posture of candor and responsibility would be better if we ask for $2 billion to take us through the end of the calendar year, on the understanding that we will come back for more, if necessary. Bob is afraid we simply cannot get away with the idea that a call-up of the planned magnitude can be paid for by anything so small as another few hundred million.

"Cy Vance told me the other day that the overall cost is likely to be on the order of $8 billion in the coming year and I can understand Bob's worry that in the nature of things, these projected costs will be sure to come out pretty quickly, especially if he looks as if he was trying to pull a fast one."

[93] CRS Interview with Horace Busby, July 7, 1988. According to Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, p. 593, ". . . as they walked out of the room Johnson turned to one of his aides, winked, pointed to McNamara and asked, 'Think we'll get a resignation out of him?' "

That evening, the President went to Camp David. The next afternoon, Saturday, July 24, he was joined for the week-end by Mr. and Mrs. McNamara and several others, including Clark Clifford. According to Busby, who was also there, one of the reasons for inviting McNamara was that the President was concerned that he might either resign or communicate to others his unhappiness with the President's decision, and that the Robert Kennedy forces might then give this a "political spin" by criticizing the President. Apparently the President felt that this was less apt to happen if McNamara was not in Washington.[95]

July 24-26

On Saturday, July 24, 1965, the President received a memorandum from White House Assistant Douglass Cater reporting on the preparations being made for favorable speeches in Congress after the troops decision was announced: "We now have six kick-off speeches ready for key senators to deliver in support of the Vietnam policy. A ten-man speech team is ready in the State Department to supply follow-up drafting. . . ." [96]

Cater also reported on a telephone call which he made that day to Carl Marcy, chief of staff of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee:

> . . . He [Marcy] took the initiative in voicing concern felt by a number of senators that the U.S. was getting involved in a land war without any support from others. He said he felt that he was reflecting the fears of Fulbright, Aiken, Church, and perhaps Russell. . . .
>
> Marcy said that the Foreign Relations Committee was extremely dissatisfied with itself, and with the role it was playing in this crisis. "They aren't convinced that more of the same thing is going to change the situation there." A recent article on the Bay of Pigs made them wonder whether the President wasn't caught up in the same inevitable drift toward failure. Marcy said some wondered whether it would not be possible to arrange things that would permit a "government in Saigon to ask us to leave."
>
> Marcy said he was deeply troubled by the lack of regular communications between the Executive and the Committee. He didn't think Rusk and Fulbright had a very useful give and take relationship. He said Fulbright had been toying with the notion of calling a private meeting with Russell, Aiken, Stennis, Church and perhaps one or two others. If they arrived at any kind of consensus, they might request an opportunity to talk with you.[97]

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[94] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam.

[95] CRS Interview with Horace Busby, July 7, 1988. Halberstam, who seems not to have understood the full implications of McNamara's presence at Camp David, attributes it to the President's desire to assuage McNamara's feelings after the decision at the meeting on Friday. *The Best and the Brightest*, p. 593.

[96] Johnson Library, WHCF, EX FG 431.

[97] Marcy had suggested such a meeting to Fulbright in a memorandum on July 22. See p. 432 below.

According to Marcy's record of the conversation, which he sent to Fulbright, Cater asked him why more Senators were not speaking in support of the President "'at this time of national crisis.' "[98] This led to a discussion of U.S. policy, and to Marcy's comment that the administration was not getting ". . . a fair picture of the attitudes of silent but influential Senators. . . . [I]t is hard for Senators to give their candid views to the President who tends to do most of the talking or arranges to have a briefing of too many leaders with too many charts. There is no chance for give and take and a reasonable discussion. Mr. Cater said he understood!"

According to Marcy, Cater asked why Rusk had not been able "to provoke such discussions." Marcy replied, ". . . he may have tried but that within the present Committee environment if one Senator got a little querulous on Administration policy, another tended to inhibit discussion by implying that someone was soft on communism."

Marcy added that he told Cater there was ". . . a feeling among Hill liberals that Rusk was not vigorous in presenting foreign policy points of view to the President. . . ." Cater replied that, on the contrary, Rusk was "vigorous, outspoken and stubborn."

Marcy suggested that someone like Cater should talk to Senators like Fulbright, Russell, Aiken, Mansfield and Church. Cater said it was a good idea but that Rusk "would be the man to do it." Marcy advised against a briefing, but said he thought a meeting ". . . with carefully selected doubters would be helpful. I added, however, that such a meeting should not be viewed only as an opportunity to make the Administration's case but that the men have ideas of their own and should be listened to by the Secretary and the President." Cater replied that possibly "a drink and an informal meeting" with such a group could be arranged by the Secretary.

That same day (July 24), McGeorge Bundy said in a memorandum to the President that he thought that McNamara's Plan III was preferable to the other two plans. He recommended that 175,000 troops be deployed by November, but that "we should explicitly and plainly reserve decision about further major deployment. After all, we have not yet had even a company-level engagement with Viet Cong forces which choose to stand their ground and fight."[99]

On Sunday, July 25, the President talked with McNamara at Camp David, and according to William Bundy, McNamara was able at that time to assure the President that the 600,000 increase in U.S. Armed Forces needed to support the estimated 300,000 U.S. troops which would be deployed in Vietnam within a year could be raised without a Reserve call-up through an increase in the draft, and that senior U.S. military officials thought that the drawbacks of a draft were acceptable. This, Bundy says, was the ". . . crucial 'hard' input for the President's decision. If calling the Reserves had been judged a military necessity, then the appeal to Congress and the country would necessarily have had to be in a loud and strident tone. As it was, McNamara's staffwork between the 21st and 25th gave the President an option to speak loud, softly, or in-between, whichever seemed most wise for central reasons of foreign policy and domestic leadership."[100] After the Camp David meeting, Bundy adds, ". . . the President decided to go the 'low-key' way. Quietly the word was passed that there would be no speech to a joint session of the Congress, no television address to the nation, no need for the sweeping array of supporting evidence and briefing material that had been visualized in planning the week before, on the theory that Secretary Rusk and Secretary McNamara would confront a major Congressional task of presentation."[101]

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[98] National Archives, RG 46, Marcy Chron File.

[99] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

Later that day (July 25), the President met briefly with McNamara, Clifford, and Arthur Goldberg, a Supreme Court Justice who had just agreed to become U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, succeeding the late Adlai Stevenson. Valenti and Busby were also present. The major subject was what action should be taken in the U.N. On July 23, Goldberg had sent the President a memorandum recommending that the Vietnam issue should be raised by the U.S. in the U.N. Security Council concurrently with the announcement that the U.S. was increasing its military commitment.[102] "The virtue of this," he said, "is that it would emphasize that the President is pursuing a political solution at the same time that he is manifesting his determination that we will not be dislodged by military force." He proposed that the resolution call for unconditional talks, without referring to a cease-fire, and he said that Harlan Cleveland believed that the resolution would be approved.

According to Valenti's very brief notes of the meeting to discuss the U.N.,[103] Clifford said, "Do not think it is advisable to go to UN with resolution now. Don't need this to reinforce peaceful intentions. Inconsistent with going in with additional troops."[104] He added: "A resolution in the UN with dramatic debate is bad for us."

Clifford went on to say: "Stop talking about Vietnam—on part of President, Rusk, Harriman, etc. Not talking about where and why we are there. Don't think they are going to be forced to [the] table by any U.N. proposal. Underplay Vietnam until January." He then said:

> Don't believe we can win in SVN. If we send in 100,000 more, the NVN will meet us. If the NVN run out of men, the Chinese will send in volunteers. Russia and China don't intend for us to win the war. If we don't win, it is a catastrophe. If we lose 50,000 plus it will ruin us. Five years, billions of dollars, 50,000 men, it is not for us.
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> At end of monsoon, quietly probe and search out with other countries—by moderating our position—to allow us to get out. Can't see anything but catastrophe for my country.

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[100] William Bundy MS., ch. 30, p. 11.

[101] *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

[102] Johnson Library, C.F. ND 19/CO 312.

[103] Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File.

[104] The notes of the meeting do not contain any further comment on the U.N. question, but in his memoirs (*The Vantage Point*, p. 148), President Johnson stated that in this meeting, ". . . the weight of opinion was against a major effort to persuade the United Nations to act at that time. Most of my advisers felt that the leaders in Hanoi would turn down any UN proposal. . . . Moreover, it was virtually certain that the Soviet Union would veto any proposal Hanoi might have trouble accepting."

The notes of the meeting do not contain any further comments by Clifford or any comments by any of the others present, but President Johnson stated in his memoirs: "I told Clifford that he was expressing worries that many Americans including the President, were experiencing. No one was more concerned than I was, but we could not simply walk out. Nor was I prepared to accept just any settlement as a cover-up for surrender. What we needed was a way to start real negotiations and I intended to keep pressing our offer to talk peace." [105]

Although he had not participated in these meetings, Abe Fortas, Johnson's old friend and adviser, whose nomination for the Supreme Court (replacing Goldberg) was announced on July 28 at the same press conference at which the President announced the troops decision, stated in an interview some years later that he, too, was opposed to sending large-scale U.S. ground forces to Vietnam. Like Clifford, however, he was in favor of keeping military pressure on the Communists and opposed to bombing halts. Fortas said he told Johnson that sending large-scale ground forces would be a mistake, and that the President replied that he had no alternative. The President's decision to do so, Fortas said in the interview, "was a bad call." [106]

On Monday, July 26, 1965, the President held two additional meetings with his advisers, the first from 12:30 p.m. to 3:10 p.m. and the second from 6:06 p.m. to 6:55 p.m.[107] Present for both meetings were the President, the Vice President, Rusk, McNamara, Ball, McGeorge Bundy, Goldberg, Lodge, and General Wheeler. Clifford, Raborn and Helms attended the first meeting after the first forty-five minutes and attended the second meeting, as did Moyers and Busby from the White House staff. Watson attended the first meeting (after the first 45 minutes) but not the second; Valenti attended the second but not the first. Also present at the second meeting were USIA Director Rowan, who was leaving office, and Leonard Marks, Director-designate. Most of the first meeting was spent discussing whether the U.S. should bomb SAM sites in response to the shooting down of an American Phantom jet fighter by a SAM over North Vietnam on July 24.[108] However, at the first meeting there was also another discussion of the question of what, if anything, the U.S. should do at the United Nations in relation to the decision to send more troops to South Vietnam. The President raised the subject, saying, "My own thinking would be that if we agree on Westmoreland requests on men, equipment, etc.—playing all our decisions low key, and not telling the Russians we intend to break our policy on economy and nuclear production cutback." He added that he wanted Goldberg to talk to the UN Secretary General and to every delegate "to tell them we are ready to talk unconditionally." Goldberg said he favored a U.S. resolution which would endorse the idea of a conference on Vietnam arranged through UN auspices. "I think we need a new initiative," he said. "The effect of the President's Baltimore speech [109] has worn off." He continued: "If I thought the war could go on quietly then I would acquiesce—but I don't think the war can go on quietly. As we send in more troops and knock out SAMs something must happen in U.N. and I want us to be the plaintiff, not the defendant." "My view," Goldberg concluded, "is that when you do anything forceful, [you] must say our objective is peace."

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[105] *Ibid.* Valenti's notes were used in the writing of *The Vantage Point*, where the Clifford quotation given above appeared as follows:

"At this session my old friend Clark Clifford was in a reflective and pessimistic mood. 'I don't believe we can win in South Vietnam,' he said. 'If we send in 100,000 more men, the North Vietnamese will meet us. If North Vietnam runs out of men, the Chinese will send in volunteers. Russia and China don't intend for us to win the war.'

"He urged that in the coming months we quietly probe possibilities with other countries for some way to get out honorably. 'I can't see anything but catastrophe for my country,' he said."

Halberstam suggests that Clifford was much more concerned and much more emphatic in his opposition than he is portrayed as being in Johnson's account: "It was not just his words but his manner which surprised the others there. He leaned back, thought and then seemed to pound the table as he spoke, speaking so forcefully that later one witness was not able to remember whether he had or had not hit the table." *The Best and the Brightest*, p. 597. It is not clear from Halberstam's account whether this occurred at the meeting on July 25 or at the afternoon meeting on July 22.

After the July 28 decision was announced, Clifford supported the President's Vietnam program. In the fall of 1965, he went to Southeast Asia, and that trip, he reported later, confirmed his support for the policy of U.S. military intervention which had been decided in July. See Clifford's article, "A Viet Nam Reappraisal," *Foreign Affairs* 47 (July 1969), pp. 601-622, at p. 606.

[106] CRS Interview with Abe Fortas, Sept. 9, 1980.

[107] Notes for both meetings, which are the source of quotations used here, were taken by Valenti, and are in the Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File.

[108] Of the six pages of Valenti's notes of the first meeting, three pages dealing with the SAM question have been completely excised.

Rusk commented that the advantage of Goldberg's proposal would be that it would "help placate our critics." On the other hand, he did not see how the U.N. could help, and he thought it would be "very negative" for the U.S. to ask for a conference and to be rejected. In addition, "We have to assume that a resolution that would meet our approval would draw Soviet veto. Might make it difficult for Soviets to push quietly for talks. Might draw amendments that would be inimical to us."

Lodge said he did not favor a U.N. resolution, and suggested a speech in the Security Council instead.

The President replied, "I'm tired of words. I've been giving [*sic*] words for 20 months. I told the UN in San Francisco [110] that I would back any effort by the UN to bring this to the conference table."

Clark Clifford joined the discussion, saying that Goldberg made an "impressive case," but that he was "unalterably opposed to a resolution in the U.N." The Russians, he said, "must stand by the NVN. I see them using the resolution as a propaganda asset—using bombing and white-U.S.-Asians." "Talking at this time publicly," Clifford added, "will not accomplish anything. If it is underplayed we have a chance to justify our views."

Clifford went on to repeat his opposition to sending more troops. Once again, however, it appears, based on the notes of the meeting, that there were no comments by others on what he said.

The President told Rusk to work out the contents of a statement for Goldberg to make to the U.N. and to consider the desirability of a Presidential letter, along the lines of his San Francisco speech, to the Secretary General. "After talking to allies," he said, "Goldberg can buttress his arguments for [a U.N.] resolution."

The second meeting that afternoon (Monday, July 26) from 6:06 p.m. to 6:55 p.m. was devoted entirely to the question of whether to conduct airstrikes against SAM sites. McNamara recommended striking two of the seven sites, located about 40 miles from Hanoi, but not the other five, which were within 10 miles. (The JCS had recommended striking all seven, but at a minimum striking the two selected by McNamara plus a third near Hanoi which may have been the one responsible for shooting down the U.S. plane.) All of those present agreed with McNamara's recommendation. Rusk was concerned that attacks on the SAM sites might lead to combat between U.S. and North Vietnamese planes, and that this could result in U.S. air attacks in the Hanoi-Haiphong area, which he thought would be a mistake. Ball, who had said in the earlier meeting that afternoon, "It's going to make it difficult for us domestically if we don't take out these SAMs right now," (adding, "We ought not let domestic politics guide us in making a small war larger"), said he agreed with McNamara's recommendation, but that there should be no illusions that the action would not "cause tremors of tension around the world," occurring, as it would, at the time the U.S. was announcing that it was going to deploy more troops. For this reason, he raised the possibility of delaying the announcement of troop deployments.

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[109] Speech at Johns Hopkins Univ., Apr. 7, 1965. See p. 217 above.
[110] Speech in San Francisco on June 25, 1965. See p. 309 above.

Clifford took the position that by striking the two SAM sites the U.S. would "show enemy our determination." Moreover, in terms of bargaining, the most valuable asset of the North Vietnamese was their industry, and the U.S. bargaining position would be affected if the North Vietnamese thought that they could use SAMs to protect industrial targets.

President Johnson said he did not want to "send boys over those [SAM] sites where we know they will be shot down." He was also concerned, however, about conveying the wrong impression to the Russians. Referring to Kennedy's action in calling up the Reserves after the 1961 Vienna Summit, as well as his actions in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, both of which he said the Russians "understood," Johnson said: "For 20 months we have been restrained—and I don't want them to misunderstand us. Only pressure we have is our bombing. We have nothing else to bargain." As the meeting ended at 6:55 p.m., he told McNamara and Wheeler: "Take them [SAMs] out."

Several hours later, around 1:00 a.m. (Washington time) U.S. planes attacked the two missile sites. Five planes were shot down during the raid. The White House Daily Diary shows that at 1:00 a.m., 3:30 a.m., and 7:35 a.m. on July 27, President Johnson telephoned the Pentagon Situation Room for reports.

July 27

On Tuesday, July 27, all was in order for a meeting of the Cabinet and of the NSC that afternoon, followed by meetings that evening with congressional leaders and the following morning (July 28) with a larger congressional group, and then the announcement to the press at noon on July 28. Prior to these, there were three other important meetings on July 27. One was the regular weekly breakfast meeting of the President with his Democratic congressional leaders, where he told them about the decision that he was preparing to announce.[111] The second was an executive session of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee later that morning to act on Lodge's nomination as U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam. The third was a meeting that afternoon at which Mansfield conferred privately with several Senators and then reported their conclusions to the President.

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[111] There apparently are no notes of this meeting.

At the Foreign Relations Committee hearing, Lodge was questioned about executive branch discussions of the McNamara report, and he replied that he did not think he should comment on what was said in those meetings.[112] He also did not discuss the pending Presidential decision; nor was he asked to do so. Most of the hearing was devoted to his views on the situation in Vietnam and what he thought the U.S. could and should do about it. He reiterated his feeling, which he had expressed in the hearings on May 19, that the problem was political rather than military: ". . . if we don't learn how to cope with Communist subversion and terrorism we are going to have extremely unfortunate results not only in Asia but in Africa and Latin America. So this is a political technique that we have to learn. I think if we do, and I think we can learn it, that I believe we can get a satisfactory outcome. It won't be a victory in the occidental sense of the word but it will be a satisfactory outcome." "What the military do," he added, "is give us the opportunity to teach the people how to stand by themselves, how to carry out the revolution for a new and better life which is what they all want. . . ."

Fulbright asked Lodge, "Do you think there is any remote possibility of what you call victory for the United States in Vietnam?" Lodge replied that it depended on the definition of "victory." At Fulbright's request Lodge gave his own definition:

> I define victory as a condition in which the young Viet Cong fighter wakes up one morning and says, "I am not going back today." And the reason he doesn't go back is that, first, he is scared, he thinks he will get killed if he goes back, and, secondly, he looks around him and he sees the rice and the fish and the ducks and the coconuts and the American Navy coming in and life looks pretty good to him, so he decides to settle down and be a farmer or he takes off into the hills where they still are in Luzon [in the Philippines] and in Malaysia, where they do very little harm.

Fulbright said he agreed with Lodge about the importance of the political factor, of "inspiring some interest in the Vietnamese . . . to fight for themselves and to defend themselves," but added that he did not know whether that was possible, nor did he know "where we come out in this show unless you can do what you say you can do. . . ."

Fulbright also asked Lodge to comment on the question of a new congressional resolution to replace or augment the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, saying that on April 30 Rusk had told the committee that the administration did not plan to ask for another resolution "unless the situation takes quite a different turn." Lodge replied that he did not think another resolution was needed, but he avoided responding to Fulbright's effort to get him to answer whether the situation had taken, in Fulbright's words, "quite a different turn."

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[112] U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, unpublished executive session transcript, July 27, 1965.

Later in the day (July 27), McGeorge Bundy sent the President a memorandum reporting on Lodge's meeting with the Foreign Relations Committee:[113]

> I talked to Lodge about his hearing and he reports that it went very well as far as he himself was concerned. I asked him whether there was any apparent criticism of our policies, and he said that noses seem to be out of joint over the fact that everybody but the Congress has now been consulted. He said he got this kind of feeling from Fulbright and Lausche and Mundt, and even from Stuart Symington. He thinks that you may wish to suggest to the Leadership and to get any other Congressional groups you see that you have wanted to get the alternatives sorted out and clear before consultation with them. Lodge said that he was pressed a good deal as to what the meetings were about, and that he refused to answer. He limited himself to telling the Committee that he thought it had been the most careful and thorough study that he had ever seen in Government. . . .
>
> He reports that the Committee was pessimistic, but that the Members seemed to share his view that it is political progress on the ground in South Vietnam that is essential.

The President met with his Cabinet from 12:30 p.m. to 2:25 p.m. Present were the Vice President, Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Attorney General Katzenbach, Ambassador Arthur Goldberg, Charles Schultze (Director of the Bureau of the Budget), Gardner Ackley (Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers), White House staff members O'Brien, Moyers, and Busby (who served as the Secretary to the Cabinet), and the following additional department heads: Fowler (Treasury), Stewart L. Udall (Interior), Anthony J. Celebrezze (Health, Education and Welfare) and John Gardner who was replacing him, Orville Freeman (Agriculture), W. Willard Wirtz (Labor), John T. Connor (Commerce), and Postmaster General John A. Gronowski.

The choices in Vietnam, the President told the group, were "1) sit there, 2) pull out, 3) go bombing, 4) add-on for present tasks."[114] Secretary Connor said, "People are ready—on our side of calling 'em [U.S. troops] up," to which the President replied: "If I put 'em in quietly maybe they'll [the Communists?] be more cautious." Secretary Celebrezze, whose preference was to "hold the line and get 'em to the conference table," commented, "Eventually you're going to have to make decision on reserves—what U.S. people will say when casualty lists come in, I don't know." The President responded: "I do."

Secretary Wirtz, whose father had been a long-time political supporter and associate of the President, said he "would rather give time for a political settlement before calling reserves." Secretary Freeman, former governor of Minnesota, said that, "a reserve call-up now would frighten people." The President replied: "We need to get public attention on other topics than Vietnam." He added: "I don't get loyalty out of some of your departments," and according to the notes of the meeting, he then "cut loose" on several Department heads.

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[113] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President.

[114] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy, handwritten notes of the Cabinet meeting of July 27, 1965. These are apparently the only notes of the meeting.

The NSC met from 5:41 p.m. to 6:20 p.m. that afternoon (July 27).[115] Attending the meeting, in addition to the President, were Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, General Wheeler, Raborn, Secretary of the Treasury Fowler, Ball, Rowan, Lodge, Llewellyn Thompson, McNaughton, Helms, and Leonard Marks. Clifford was also present, as were Cooper, Smith, Valenti, Moyers, Busby, and Richard N. Goodwin from the NSC and White House staffs. Rusk discussed the political situation. He said that the Chinese Communists were "most adamant against" negotiations between the North Vietnamese and the U.S. and South Vietnamese. "The clash between the Chinese Communists and the Russians continues," he added, and, "It appears that our fears about a coordinated front are not realized." [116]

"There appear to be elements of caution on the other side—in Hanoi as well as in Moscow," Rusk said. "Our purpose is to keep our contacts open with the other side in the event that they have a new position to give us." [117]

Rusk concluded his comments by saying that the decision to send more troops ". . . should be presented publicly in a low key but in such a way as to convey accurately that we are determined to prevent South Vietnam from being taken over by Hanoi. At the same time, we seek to avoid a confrontation with either the Chinese Communists or the Soviet Union." [118]

McNamara then discussed the military situation. The number of Communist forces in South Vietnam and the percentage of these committed to battle had increased, he said, as had Communist control over the countryside. Moreover, there had been increased desertions from South Vietnamese forces. The result was that there was only about a 1:1 combat ratio between the opposing forces. In order to stop the Communists, the U.S. would have to increase its forces. An initial deployment of 50,000 additional troops (13 battalions) was needed, which would bring the number of U.S. forces to 125,000 (28 battalions). This would be followed by the deployment of 50,000 more troops before November 1, 1965, and then by 100,000 additional troops in 1966.

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[115] There are three sets of notes of this 553rd NSC meeting. The one prepared by Bromley Smith is in the Johnson Library, NSF NSC Meetings File. A second set prepared by Valenti is in the Meeting Notes File. A third set, also in the Meeting Notes File, was prepared by McGeorge Bundy, who put his notes into typed form in a memorandum on Nov. 2, 1968 which stated: "The memorandum is strictly limited to what the notes themselves contain; there is no reliance on memory." Except where indicated, all quotations used here are from Smith's notes.

[116] The quotation at the end of this sentence is from Valenti's notes.

[117] Just prior to this statement, Rusk made a statement about negotiations, the first part of which, about a line and a half in Smith's and Valenti's notes, was excised when these documents were declassified. The remainder of his comment was as follows: (Smith notes) "We have asked many times what the North Vietnamese would do if we stopped the bombing. We have had nothing to date in reply." (Valenti notes) "We can't consider this because we have no response to our pleas."

[118] The next day (July 28), Wheeler sent this cable (JCS 2800-65) to Sharp and Westmoreland (CMH, Westmoreland Papers, Message File): "Do not be surprised or disappointed if the public announcement does not set forth the full details of the program, but instead reflects an incremental approach. This tactic will probably be adopted in order to hold down the international noise level. I can assure you that COMUSMACV's request for units, personnel and material for Phase I [175,000 troops] will be met in full according to the desired schedule. Also, we will be taking the necessary steps to insure that we can meet the follow-on requirements for Phase II, [the additional 100,000 troops] subsequent to 1 January 1966."

It should be noted that the President had already tentatively approved the deployment of 125,000 troops when he agreed in late June to send the 1st Air Cavalry Division in addition to the troops previously authorized.

Lodge said he was asked at the Foreign Relations Committee hearing whether a 10:1 ratio would be needed to fight the guerrillas, and, if so, whether this would not require U.S. forces of "astronomical size." General Wheeler replied: "Air power throws doubt on usual ratio of 10-1. In the Delta where ratio is 1:1 we are holding our own due to the mobility of choppers [helicopters]." [119] He went on to say that because of greater U.S. mobility and firepower "perhaps 4:1 is the right ratio," adding that, except for IV Corps (the delta, south of Saigon), Westmoreland thought the U.S. could maintain its present position and possibly move back into contested areas.

Lodge replied that it should be made clear to Senators that the 10:1 ratio was obsolete.

The President then summarized five options and his reasons for deciding in favor of the fifth option (McNamara's Plan III in his presentation on July 23):

> (1) Use our massive power, including SAC [Strategic Air Command], to bring the enemy to his knees. Less than 10% of our people urge this course of action.
>
> (2) We could get out on the grounds that we don't belong there. Not very many people feel this way about Vietnam. Most feel that our national honor is at stake and that we must keep our commitments there.
>
> (3) We could keep our forces at the present level, approximately 80,000 men, but suffer the consequences of losing additional territory and of accepting increased casualties. We could "hunker up." No one is recommending this course.
>
> (4) We could ask for everything we might desire from Congress—money, authority to call up the reserves, acceptance of the deployment of more combat battalions. This dramatic course of action would involve declaring a state of emergency and a request for several billion dollars. Many favor this course. However, if we do go all out in this fashion, Hanoi would be able to ask the Chinese Communists and the Soviets to increase aid and add to their existing commitments.
>
> (5) We have chosen to do what is necessary to meet the present situation, but not to be unnecessarily provocative to either the Russians or the Communist Chinese. We will give the commanders the men they say they need and, out of existing materiel in the U.S., we will give them the materiel they say they need. We will get the necessary money in the new budget and will use our transfer authority until January. We will neither brag about what we are

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[119] This quotation is from Valenti's notes.

> doing or thunder at the Chinese Communists and the Russians.
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> This course of action will keep us there during the critical monsoon season and possibly result in some gains. Meanwhile, we will push on the diplomatic side. This means that we will use up our manpower reserves. We will not deplete them, but there will be a substantial reduction. Quietly, we will push up the level of our reserve force.[120] We will [not?] let Congress push us but, if necessary, we will call the legislators back [into session].
>
> We will hold until January. The alternatives are to put in our big stack now or hold back until Ambassadors Lodge and Goldberg and the diplomats can work.

According to McGeorge Bundy's notes, ". . . while the President was placing his preference for alternative five, as against alternative four, on international grounds, his unspoken object was to protect his legislative program—or at least this had appeared to be his object in his informal talks as late as Thursday and Friday of the preceding week—July 22, and July 23."

Also according to Bundy's notes, the President told the NSC of his conversation earlier that day (they had met from 2:30 p.m. to 3:07 p.m.) with John Oakes, editorial page editor of the *New York Times,* who had asked Johnson if the U.S. should have been involved in Vietnam in 1954. "The President answered that we were in 1965, and 'I enjoyed it if he didn't.' "

Following the President's presentation of the five options and his statement that he had chosen the fifth option, he asked each of those present whether he agreed. In his memoirs, the President said: "Each nodded his approval or said 'Yes.' "[121] According to the notes of the meeting prepared by the Executive Secretary of the NSC, however, the President did not ask those present whether they agreed with the decision, but whether they were opposed. Rather than affirmative responses, "there was no response."[122]

"The key moment" according to David Halberstam,[123] "was when he [President Johnson] came to General Wheeler and stood looking directly at him for a moment. 'Do you, General Wheeler, agree?' Wheeler nodded his agreement. It was, said someone who was present, an extraordinary moment, like watching a lion tamer dealing with some of the great lions. Everyone in the room knew Wheeler objected, that the Chiefs wanted more, that they wanted a wartime footing and a call-up of the reserves; the thing they feared most was a partial war and a partial commitment. But Wheeler was boxed in; he had the choice of opposing and displeasing his Commander in Chief and being overruled, anyway, or going along. He went along."

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[120] For a discussion of the factors involved in the decision not to mobilize Reserves, and criticism of the President for not doing so, see John D. Stuckey and Joseph H. Pistorius, "Mobilization for the Vietnam War: A Political and Military Catastrophe," *Parameters* 15 (Spring 1985), pp. 27-38, a chapter from the book by Richard B. Crossland and James T. Currie, *Twice the Citizen: A History of the United States Army Reserve, 1908-1983* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief, Army Reserve, 1984).

[121] *The Vantage Point,* p. 149.

[122] This is the description from Smith's notes: "There was no response when the President asked whether anyone in the room opposed the course of action decided upon." For some reason, this sentence was deleted from the copy of the notes in the NSF NSC History File at the Johnson Library. However, it has not been deleted from a copy of the same document in the library's Meeting Notes File.

In *A Very Human President* (pp. 358-359) Valenti said that when the President asked whether there were any objections to the proposed course of action, none of those present spoke up. This included, he says, the members of the White House staff who were present, one of whom was Bill Moyers, later known for opposing the war. "I remember," Valenti added, "at a dinner party in early 1968, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., commented to my wife that LBJ had not listened to the war advice of Bill Moyers when he was a presidential aide. 'But, Arthur,' I remonstrated, 'Bill held no such view, at least not before midyear 1966. He was as much in favor of massive intervention as the Pentagon. If he wasn't he never let anybody know his true feeling. The president made it clear to me many times that with the exception of George Ball, no higher official in the government was opposed to our position and that included *every* White House aide." (emphasis in original)

[123] *The Best and the Brightest,* pp. 599-600.

At 6:35 p.m. on July 27, fifteen minutes after the NSC meeting ended, the President met for approximately two hours with 11 congressional leaders.[124] Present were the President, Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, General Wheeler, Raborn, Lodge, and from the White House staff, Valenti, Moyers, Busby, Cater, and Goodwin, as well as the President's assistant for congressional liaison, Lawrence F. O'Brien, and his assistant for domestic legislation, Joseph A. Califano, Jr. Present from the Senate were Mansfield, Dirksen, Hickenlooper, Smathers, Kuchel, and Long (Louisiana), and from the House, Speaker McCormack, Albert, Boggs, Ford, and Leslie C. Arends (R/Ill.), the minority whip. Only elected leaders had been invited to the meeting and no chairmen or senior members of relevant committees were included except as they also happened to be elected leaders, which was the case with Mansfield and Hickenlooper, both of whom were also senior members of the Foreign Relations Committee.

The President began by summarizing the five options which he had summarized for the NSC. The choice, he said was between two of the options, both of which would provide Westmoreland the necessary troops. One (option 4) would be to declare a national emergency, call up the Reserves, and ask Congress for thousands of men and billions of dollars. "Best guess is Y billion and X men." This alternative, he said, "has a good deal of appeal . . . because we should do what is needed," but "there is an argument against it in the possible reaction of Hanoi. We don't want to have things get more violent just as we have a new man going to the U.N. We have hints from the Russians that we should take account of." "I don't want to make this any more provocative than necessary. I have reasons for not overstating the case."

The other choice (option 5), to "give you the story now and the bill later," would be to give Westmoreland the troops he had requested and to increase draft calls and extend tours of duty.[125] Meanwhile, Congress would be asked to approve $1 or $2 billion, and a further request for funds would be postponed until the following January. "Maybe by then," he said, "we'll be past the monsoon and they [the Communists] may have further thoughts. If Russians didn't come in and if China's not gamblin [*sic*] we might be able to say 'cut out your foolishness and come to conference table.' I don't think there's much chance. Others say we've got to try. We've tried 15 times."

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[124] There are two sets of notes of the meeting, one by Valenti and the other by McGeorge Bundy, both of which are in the Johnson Library, Meeting Notes File. Bundy's notes were taken in longhand, and a copy of these is in the Bundy papers at the Johnson Library. In December 1968, he prepared a typed memorandum of the meeting based on the handwritten notes which states: "Nothing not clearly stated in the notes is included." The typed memorandum does not, however, contain all of the handwritten notes. Except where indicated, all quotations here are from either the typed or the handwritten version of Bundy's notes.

[125] Bundy's notes on the meeting do not indicate whether the President used specific figures in discussing a question about Westmoreland's request, but they indicate that McNamara referred, in answer to Representative Arends (see below), to "an immediate requirement of thirteen battalions and 50,000 men," adding that more forces would be needed before January 1.

After the President's comments and statements by Rusk, McNamara, and Lodge, congressional leaders voiced their support for sending additional troops to Vietnam. Most of them seemed to favor the second choice, "the story now and the bill later," particularly after it was explained that both choices would involve the same amount of money and the same number of troops; the difference being, the President said, that, ". . . one was more dramatic and blunter and more powerful—if that is what you wanted."

Senator Dirksen said, "let's make the country realize this is dangerous, serious business." The President replied: "I think they do." Dirksen added, referring to the congressional committee which tried to influence President Lincoln's conduct of the Civil War, "I'm not going to be like the Committee on the Conduct of the War." He said, however, that it was five months until January, and that, "you can't wait that long if you need it [funds]. If you need it you ought to ask for it." The President replied: "We'll get it. You'll have a good, sizeable supplemental in January—a few billion dollars."

Those present at the meeting appear to have understood and to have accepted the fact that the decision being made by the President with their concurrence or acquiescence could involve the United States in a long, costly and possibly inconclusive land war in Asia, despite the President's emphasis on negotiations. The President said, "We don't know if this will be 2 years or 4 years or what." Rusk added: "The attitude of the Communist world is the key question." Senator Smathers replied, "We are denying the VC the victory aren't we? Is not our purpose not to be driven out—and to avoid World War III by not bringing in China and Russia?"

"Is this a change of policy?" Smathers asked. The President replied: "As aid to the VC increases, our need to increase our forces goes up. There is no change in policy." [126]

Senate Democratic whip Russell Long said that Ho Chi Minh had talked about a 20 year war but he thought it might be a "100 year war." He added, "We should look at the stakes and look at the fact that we have been touched up. Should we put in more men or take a whipping? We'd better go in."

Speaker McCormack said that, "dedicated military leaders have asked for it," and that he saw no alternative. He said he was impressed by the analogy to Hitler. The "road to appeasement is a road to war."

There were some questions. House Democratic whip Boggs asked whether there had been any "major defections" of South Vietnamese forces. "No," McNamara replied. What about the government? Boggs asked. "It's a weak government and will be while the VC attacks," McNamara said. Why, asked Boggs, did the U.S. and South

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[126] Quotations in this paragraph are from Valenti's notes.

Vietnam need a 10-1 ratio of troops compared to the Communists? (He apparently did not realize that the Westmoreland request was not predicated on the need to achieve that ratio.) General Wheeler replied that because of the helicopter, which was the reason the South Vietnamese had been "so successful until recently," a 10-1 ratio was not necessary—"maybe 4-1 is right."

House Republican Leader Ford asked for a clarification of option 4 (national emergency, Reserve call-up, full request for men and money) and option 5 (the limited request which the President had decided to make). The President replied that under option 4 he would "have to get a new bill and get a great big reserve plan and go through a big process," whereas under option 5 "3 times I'll tell you 30,000 or so without saying X billion and 100,000 if I can avoid it. . . . We'd just put $1.8 [billion] or whatever on the Senate side and then get in order for January." There were "good reasons for not calling Reserves," he said. "If you call 'em now you won't be really ready. You'll have it worked out better in January."

Ford pointed out that under option 5 draft calls would be doubled, and wondered about the effect of this on the training of forces. McNamara responded that it would be "about the same as under option 4. When we call reserves we have to double draft calls anyway."

House Republican whip Arends asked how many men General Westmoreland had requested. McNamara replied that there was an immediate requirement for 13 battalions and 50,000 men, and that there would be a need for additional troops before January 1. "We can supply them faster than he can receive them." Rusk commented that there had been some "sharp engagements but you do *not* have Giap's phase 3" (a more conventional war, rather than the phase 2 guerrilla war). (emphasis in original)

Senator Hickenlooper, chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee and ranking Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee said that options 1, 2, and 3 "are out." "Anything short of a result that will make a reliable buffer would be disastrous. A negotiated so-called peace that doesn't do this will merely compound felony." "I differentiate," he added, "between approved and supported. Decisions will be supported [by Congress], not approved." The President replied: "I'm in the same position you are. I supported '54 [President Eisenhower's decision on Vietnam] without approving."

Apparently the only leaders at the meeting who questioned the expansion of the U.S. role in Vietnam were Senators Hickenlooper and Mansfield. Hickenlooper, following his earlier comments, said, "We're treating symptoms. Grave danger of negotiated stalemate. We need a reliable settlement." The President replied: "You talk to Mike [Mansfield] and Bill [Fulbright] and see what you agree on. Right now it's not a practicable problem. They think they're winning. That's a 'good long way away.'" Hickenlooper responded, "The big question is: What we are going to do?" The President answered: "We are going to try to bring about a situation where the government of South Vietnam will be able to defend itself against foreign ideology. Westy wants help—I'm gonna give it—the question is how." [127]

Senator Mansfield was the only leader at the meeting who opposed the sending of more troops, but he said that as a Senator and as majority leader he would support the President's position. In recording Mansfield's comments, McGeorge Bundy's notes of the meeting state only: "Senator Mansfield asked the President's indulgence and read a statement in which there appeared remarks about apathy, disquiet, and apprehension." According to Valenti's notes of the meeting, Mansfield said:

> I would not be true to myself if I didn't speak. This position has certain inevitability. Whatever pledge we had was to *assist* SVN in its own defense. Since then there has been no government of legitimacy. We ought to make that decision every day. We owe this government nothing—no pledge of any kind. We are going deeper into war. Even total victory would be vastly costly. Best hope for salvation is quick stalemate and negotiations. We cannot expect our people to support a war for 3-5 years. What we are about is an anti-Communist crusade, on [and on]. Escalation begets escalation. (emphasis in original)

Neither Bundy nor Valenti's notes of the meeting indicate what reply, if any, the President made to Mansfield. According to Valenti, "The President nodded to Senator Mansfield, his old colleague and friend, possibly feeling as I did, that this nation has managed to withstand the bloody assaults which threaten its survival because of men like Mansfield." Valenti added, "Mansfield's discontent was remarkably prophetic." [128]

"The Speaker closed the meeting," Bundy's notes state, "by saying that the President would have united support. This was a historic meeting. The President would have the support of all true Americans."

With the exception of the comments by Mansfield and Hickenlooper, there were no questions or discussion of U.S. goals or objectives in Vietnam or of the need for taking additional military action in the future. Nor was there any discussion of whether such a war could be fought successfully. There was also no discussion of the potential monetary cost of the war, of the dangers of inflation, or of the possible need to increase taxes. There was no discussion of the question of further approval or authorization of the war by Congress, or of the possible problem of future public opposition to the war if, like Korea, it became long and costly. But after the President's comment that he was going to give Westmoreland the help he needed, which left only the question as to how that help would be given, it is not surprising that these more basic questions about the war were not raised. As Carl Albert, the House Democratic majority leader at the time and subsequently Speaker of the House, said in a later interview, "I don't remember a President who didn't ask if there were any opinions. . . . But sometimes it

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[127] The next morning (July 28), probably in response to Hickenlooper's comments at this meeting, Rusk, Ball and Goldberg had breakfast with Hickenlooper. In a report to the President later that day, Rusk said merely that the discussion was largely about Vietnam. U.S. Department of State, Lot File 74 D 164, Memorandum from Rusk to the President, July 28, 1965, in "President's Evening Reading Items, 1965."

[128] Valenti, *A Very Human President*, p. 355.

[the opportunity to disagree] came pretty late. . . . We were always after the fact in giving advice." [129]

William Bundy concludes that, with the exception of a few Members, Congress supported the President's decision to go to war in Vietnam: [130] ". . . Congress basically went along, and went along with no significant gaps in its knowledge, or in its knowledge of the executive view of the situation." The President, he adds, had "corralled" the leadership. "They had acquiesced, and they had acquiesced on a basis that didn't include claiming this was going to solve the problem in six months or that this was going to be an easy war. . . . The picture they had in July 1965, if they were ordinary readers of the papers, and if they listened to what was said in these meetings, would have been in essence the picture that the President had."

Immediately after the meeting with congressional leaders, the President met in his office from 8:30 p.m. to 9:55 p.m. with Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy, Moyers, Busby and Goodwin. He told them he wanted a statement that he could use in making the announcement the next day, "the essence of which would be that he was giving Westmoreland what he needs." "We are prolonging the agony for 90 days," he told the group. McNamara, according to McGeorge Bundy's notes, said he was "full of confidence on handling"—apparently a reference to the new U.S. role in the war.

During the meeting with the congressional leaders, the President, reading to the group from a wire service statement, had remarked disparagingly on the advance report of a speech which Vice President Humphrey was preparing to make that night at the National Governors' Conference. (In this speech, which had been cleared both at the State Department and at the White House, Humphrey made a strong appeal to patriotism, and emphasized the suffering that Americans would have to endure in order to protect freedom.) In the meeting, Johnson is said to have "delivered a cutting rebuke to his Vice-President for departing from the official line [by over-emphasizing the seriousness of the decision about to be announced]. It lasted only a moment or two, but this thoughtless insult to the Vice President . . . made a chilling impression on those who heard it. Meanwhile, Humphrey was taking a telephone call from the White House. When he went before the Governors, the offending language had been deleted from his text." [131]

Humphrey himself may have wondered about the turn of events that had brought the United States to the verge of a major ground war in Vietnam. In April 1965, when he and Senator Gaylord Nelson were returning from a White House conference on Vietnam, Humphrey is reported to have said to Nelson, "You know, Gaylord, there are people at State and the Pentagon who want to send *three hundred thousand* men over there. But the President will never get sucked into anything like that." [132]

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[129] CRS Interview with Carl Albert, Oct. 31, 1978.

[130] CRS Interview with William Bundy, Aug. 3, 1978.

[131] Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, *Lyndon B. Johnson and the Exercise of Power* (New York: New American Libary, 1966), p. 551.

[132] Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, p. 572. (emphasis in original)

Advice from Congressional "Wise Men"

When Mansfield made his statement in the leadership meeting of July 27 he did so knowing that the President had probably received and read a report which Mansfield had sent to the White House a short time before the leadership meeting began. The report, which should have given pause to any President, was of a meeting at 3:30 p.m. that afternoon of Senators Mansfield, Russell, Fulbright, John Sparkman, Aiken, and Cooper, to discuss the Vietnam situation and the question of sending additional U.S. troops.

The idea of having the meeting, which was held at Fulbright's initiative, apparently originated in a memorandum from Marcy to Fulbright on July 22 in which Marcy said:[133]

> We seem to be on the verge of another important decision regarding Vietnam—one on which the views of the Senate will not be sought until after the decision. There is now a last chance to do something that may halt this constant progression toward war.
>
> The Committee on Foreign Relations has no consensus. But certain of the most important Senators seem (to me at least) to have an unspoken consensus which goes something like this:
>
> 1. We should never have gotten in;
> 2. We ought to get out; with face, if possible; without face if the alternative is to go above 150,000 men.
> 3. The President is trying to find a way out, but has had no success.
> 4. Generally, the pressures in the Executive branch are for escalation.
>
> Might it be helpful if you were to take the initiative to invite these Senators—who probably have the same doubts that you have—to meet with you just to talk among yourselves? I would include in addition to yourself, Senators Russell, Mansfield, Stennis (?), and Aiken.
>
> The idea would be that if such a group could find an area of agreement as to courses of action to recommend, it might call privately on the President. . . .

Several days later, reporter E. W. Kenworthy of the *New York Times,* who was close to Marcy and apparently was also concerned about congressional inaction, called Walter Lippmann and urged him to call Fulbright and suggest that he take the initiative in getting a group of Senators together to see if they could influence the President. Lippmann did so on the morning of July 27.[134]

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[133] National Archives, RG 46, Marcy Chron File.

[134] Same location, Marcy Chron File, Marcy "Vietnam Chronology," July 30, 1965. That morning (July 27), Lippmann said in his column in the *Washington Post* that the U.S. was becoming involved in the war without active support from any of its allies and with "a reluctant and depressed acquiesence" from the American people. "Nations fight well," he said, "when defending themselves, when, that is to say, they have a vital interest. It is the lack of an American vital interest which explains the unrest mood of depression and anxiety. . . ." He added that there were two main reasons for increasing U.S. involvement: "The first, much the more powerful of the two, is a proud refusal to admit a mistake, to admit the failure of an attempt, begun ten years ago, to make South Vietnam a pro-American and anti-Chinese state. More than anything else we are fighting to avoid admitting a failure—to put it bluntly, we are fighting to save face." The second, he said, was to defend not just the South Vietnamese, but others threatened by the Chinese, which he called "the conception of ourselves as the solitary policeman of mankind." This he considered "a dangerous form of self-delusion, especially in situations involving

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After the meeting, Mansfield prepared a memorandum for the President which he immediately sent to the White House. This was what he told the President:[135]

> I opened the meeting by reporting fully on the Leadership discussion of Viet Nam this morning. There was a general sense of reassurance that your objective was not to get in deeply and that you intended to do only what was essential in the military line until January, while Rusk and Goldberg were concentrating on attempting to get us out. A general desire to support you in this course was expressed. It was felt that one of the best ways this could be done would be by communicating the feelings of some of the senior Members of the Senate to you in this fashion.
>
> Among the major points which were raised by various of the Senators in attendance during the discussions were the following:
>
> 1. The estimate of 100,000 men by the end of the year was probably short, that the more likely figure would be 150,000.
> 2. The Russians feel that they have an obligation to aid the North Vietnamese not unlike ours towards a Western European country which might be attacked and if we expect them to help in getting negotiations started before this situation gets out of hand we have to provide them with some basis for helping.
> 3. The United Nations may be an important link in a way out of the situation but this possibility is clouded by the issue of Article 19; it may not be opportune to insist upon enforcement of the Article at this time; but heat is already being generated on the issue in the House and some prompt Presidential initiative on the point in public may be desirable. [This refers to the fact that the U.S.S.R., France, and several other countries had not paid assessment for UN peace-keeping operations to which they objected, and the U.S. argued that under Article 19 of the U.N. Charter they could be denied their voting rights in the General Assembly. In the 19th session of the General Assembly which ended in February 1965, this had led to an agreement that there would be no vote. If this occurred at the 20th session, beginning in Sept. 1965, however, the U.S. would not have been able to get a vote, if it decided to do so, on a proposal dealing with Vietnam. In mid- August, the U.S. reversed its position and announced that it would not longer insist that nations in arrears under Article 19 would not be allowed to vote.]
> 4. Bridges to Eastern Europe need to be kept open and continued encouragement of the evolution of these nations (Yugoslavia, in particular) towards full independence, po-

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"revolutionary war" which "cannot be dealt with by American military intervention whenever disorder threatens to overwhelm the constituted authority." By becoming involved militarily in the revolutionary war in Vietnam, he concluded, "We are allowing ourselves to be cast in the role of the enemy of the miserable and unhappy masses of the emerging nations."

[135] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

litical and economic, under their own unique forms of organization is of the greatest importance.

5. The Russians are deeply concerned that we are abandoning the policy of peaceful co-existence; some tangible reassurance that we are not, perhaps through the consular convention, is desirable.

6. The country is backing the President on Viet Nam primarily because he is President, not necessarily out of any understanding or sympathy with policies on Viet Nam; beneath the support, there is deep concern and a great deal of confusion which could explode at any time; in addition racial factors at home could become involved.

7. The main perplexity in the Vietnamese situation is that even if you win, totally, you still do not come out well. What have you achieved? It is by no means a "vital" area of U.S. concern as it was described by Lodge at a hearing this morning.

8. There is reason for concern and irritation at Cao Ky's statement that we should fight on the perimeter while the Vietnamese military is organizing the rear.

9. The President was ill-advised to begin the bombing of North Viet Nam in the first place and the error was then compounded by the limited character of the bombing.

10. In clarification of what would follow a failure of the Goldberg-Rusk effort between now and January, it was pointed out that it would mean that we would probably have to add very substantially to manpower at that time.

11. The military concept of a greatly extended bombing in Viet Nam is sound.

12. Another cessation of bombing of longer duration than the previous one might be desirable as a means of getting discussions underway.

13. Underground contact might be sought not only with the Russians but with the Chinese as well; it could be particularly useful in bringing about talks in the event another pause in the bombing is attempted.

14. France, who has the best contacts in Indochina, has been virtually ignored as a possible avenue of approach to negotiations.

15. The situation at Pleiku is highly dangerous; if the U.S. garrison is attacked it could be another Dien Bien Phu and it could mean increased pressure for our deeper involvement.

16. The French parliament, at no time, permitted conscripts to be used in Indochina.

17. The Viet Cong are highly skilled and formidable fighters; the South Vietnamese forces are of dubious quality and larger and larger desertions can be anticipated.

18. The important thing in a situation like this which is clearly detrimental to us is to concentrate on finding a way out; a possibility might exist in a combination of the coastal enclave-strategy, a cessation of aerial bombardment and the use of all possible contacts to get negotiations underway.

> 19. McNamara has been a disappointment in his handling of this situation, probably because he is being used in a way in which he ought not to be used.

The memorandum concluded:

> It should be noted that there was obviously not a unanimity among the Members present on all of the points listed. But there was a very substantial agreement on many of them. Moreover, there was full agreement that insofar as Viet Nam is concerned we are deeply enmeshed in a place where we ought not to be; that the situation is rapidly going out of control; and that every effort should be made to extricate ourselves.

An appreciation of the potential significance of the views expressed in this memorandum may be gained by considering the composition of this group of congressional "Wise Men." Mansfield was not only the majority leader, but was highly respected in the Senate, especially for his knowledge of Asia. Aiken, the senior Republican in the Senate, who was known as being close to Mansfield, was also highly regarded. Russell, chairman of the Armed Services Committee and Johnson's mentor and long-time friend, was generally considered to be first among equals in the Senate. Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, had also been close to the President for many years and was recognized for his acumen and knowledge of foreign affairs. He had also provided strong support for the President's foreign policy, including his role in the passage of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. Sparkman, a moderate southerner, who had been the Democratic Party's nominee for Vice President in 1952, and who generally supported the foreign policy position of the executive branch, was also very respected in the Senate. Cooper, a moderate Republican with experience in diplomacy, was regarded as one of the best informed and most astute Members of the Senate in the field of foreign affairs. Four of them—Fulbright, Sparkman, Mansfield and Aiken—were on the Foreign Relations Committee, and three of these were the top three Democrats on that committee (Fulbright, Sparkman, and Mansfield, in that order of seniority). All of them were also influential in the affairs of their party, although Aiken and Cooper tended to be more liberal in foreign affairs than many of their fellow Republicans.

In short, these six men constituted an extraordinary "privy council." Like Clark Clifford, they were accomplished men of power and influence, whose insight and good judgment made them among the most respected American political figures of the time.

Only one of these men, Mansfield, was invited to the White House congressional meeting on the night of July 27, and he was invited because of his position as majority leader.

The next day (July 28), President Johnson replied to Mansfield's memorandum by sending him a memorandum from McNamara answering Mansfield's nineteen points.[136] In the memorandum,

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[136] McNamara's memorandum to the President discussed all 19 points except for the 19th, which concerned McNamara himself, and which Johnson answered in his covering letter to Mansfield (copies of which were sent with copies of the McNamara's memorandum to all five of the other Senators) in which he said: ". . . I consider Bob McNamara to be the best Secretary of Defense in the history of this country. Like myself, he is searching for the best solution to a very difficult situation." These materials are in the Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

McNamara generally defended the administration's position while agreeing with Mansfield that diplomatic efforts to end the war were important. Contrary, however, to the impression left by the President in his final meetings with the NSC and with congressional leaders that a decision about further troop deployments (after sending the additional 50,000) would be delayed in the hope that a diplomatic solution could be found, McNamara stated candidly, "I do not expect Secretary Rusk or Ambassador Goldberg to be able in the short term to produce any miracle. It does not appear possible to achieve a settlement out there until it is fairly clear to the enemy that a victory for them is unlikely."

McNamara also defended the bombing of North Vietnam, but added, ". . . I do not believe that even a greatly expanded program of bombing could be expected to produce significant North Vietnamese interest in a negotiated solution until they have been disappointed in their hopes for a quick military success in the South."

On Mansfield's sixth point about the basis for public support of the President and the possibility of a subsequent negative public reaction, McNamara said it was important to explain U.S. policy to the public, but he added: "We must bear in mind that Vietnam is a new type situation—one of the kind we have not faced before but which we will face many times in the future. The character of this new threat must come to be understood by the American people."

When the President sent McNamara's memorandum to Mansfield, he added this handwritten note after point 6 (public support): "Could you organize a group of our Dem. Senators to help in this respect?"

In response to Mansfield's seventh point (that Vietnam was not vital) McNamara replied:

> South Vietnam *is* vital to the United States in the significance that a demonstrable defeat would have on the future effectiveness of the United States on the world scene—especially in areas where people are depending upon our guarantee of their independence. It is a vital US concern to maintain our honor as an ally and our formidability as an opponent. As for how the situation in Vietnam will ultimately come out, we cannot now know. But there is a range of outcomes—many less than perfect ones—that would satisfy American vital interests. Our objectives, after all, are quite limited in Vietnam. They are, first, to permit the South Vietnamese to be independent and to make a free choice of government and, second, to establish for the world that Communist externally inspired and supported wars of liberation will not work. (emphasis in original)

July 28, the President Announces His Decision

On the morning of July 28, 1965, President Johnson held an off-the-record bipartisan meeting from 8:55 a.m. to 10:40 a.m. with 43 senior Members of Congress at which he told them of his decision.[137] The only notes on the meeting are some very brief hand-

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[137] Attending were the President, Rusk, McNamara, McGeorge Bundy and the leaders of the House, Speaker McCormack, Albert, Boggs, Ford, and Arends, and of the Senate, Mansfield, Long, Smathers, Dirksen, and Kuchel, as well as senior Democrats and Republicans (including

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written notes by McGeorge Bundy.[138] According to these, the President commented that he was "a prize fighter up against Jack Dempsey," and that he had to use both hands—"Bob McNamara for the military response and Dean Rusk for the diplomatic search for a settlement." Senator Fulbright said he approved of a low-key response, but asked, "Just why this particular area?" [139] The President replied: "Every expert you have holds [that] to retreat from our stated objective would involve us in greater dangers later—weakness in Korea and in Berlin—that you'd have to move from any place they put the heat on you." "There are military men," the President added, "who'd like to go a lot further."

At a televised press conference at noon on July 28, 1965, the President announced his decision.[140] In South Vietnam, he said, "There are great stakes in the balance":

> Most of the non-Communist nations of Asia cannot, by themselves and alone, resist the growing might and the grasping ambition of Asian communism.
>
> Our power, therefore, is a very vital shield. If we are driven from the field in Viet-Nam, then no nation can ever again have the same confidence in American promises, or in American protection.
>
> In each land the forces of independence would be considerably weakened, and an Asia so threatened by Communist domination would certainly imperil the security of the United States itself.
>
> We did not choose to be the guardians at the gate, but there is no one else.

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each chairman and ranking minority member) from the Senate and House Armed Services and Appropriations Committees, as well as the Senate Foreign Relations and the House Foreign Affairs Committees: Senators Aiken, Harry F. Byrd (Virginia), Carlson, Ellender, Fulbright, Carl T. Hayden (D/Ariz.), Hickenlooper, Lister Hill (D/Ala.), Mundt, Russell, Saltonstall, Margaret Chase Smith (R/Maine), Sparkman, Stennis, Strom Thurmond (R/S.C.), and Milton R. Young (R/N.D.), and Representatives E. Ross Adair (R/Ind.), William H. Bates (R/Mass.), Frances Bolton (R/Ohio), Frank T. Bow (R/Ohio), Omar T. Burleson (D/Tex.), Wayne L. Hays (D/Ohio), F. Edward Hébert (D/La.), Charles R. Jonas (D/N.C.), Edna F. Kelly (D/N.Y.), Michael J. Kirwin (D/Ohio), Mahon, Morgan, Alvin E. O'Konski (R/Wis.), Philip J. Philbin (D/Ga.), Melvin Price (D/Ill.), Rivers, and Clement J. Zablocki (D/Wis.).

[138] Johnson Library, Papers of McGeorge Bundy.

[139] The next morning (July 29), Rusk and Ball had breakfast with Fulbright to talk about Vietnam, and it was agreed that they would have such a session every week. U.S. Department of State, Lot File 74 D 164, Memorandum from Ball to the President, July 29, 1965, in "President's Evening Reading Items, 1965."

[140] *Public Papers of the President*, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, pp. 794 ff.

The statement which the President made on July 28 was drafted by White House Assistant Richard Goodwin. According to William Bundy (U.S. Department of State, Lot File 85 D 240 [William Bundy Papers], Notes made in January 1969 on the 1965 decisions), "Finally, the decision reached or communicated in these meetings [July 21-27] was given to the ineffable Mr. Richard Goodwin to frame into a Presidential utterance. Goodwin took the notes submitted by my brother (and indirectly by myself) and turned them into what both Mac and I thought to be a crusade against Communist China—which had not seemed to us the wise or indeed the accurate description of the exercise." (The June 28 statement characterized the war as being "guided by North Vietnam" and "spurred by Communist China," adding that "Most of the non-Communist nations of Asia, cannot, by themselves and alone, resist the growing might and the grasping ambitions of Asian communism.")

It is not clear what Bundy meant by "notes submitted by my brother," but he may have been referring to language prepared by Unger, and approved by both Bundys, which was sent to Saigon on July 26 for Taylor to use in talking to Ky and Thieu, (Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, Washington to Saigon 237, July 27, 1965), part of which was then sent to the President by McGeorge Bundy in a memorandum on July 27 (same source) in which Bundy said that the language had been approved by Ky and Thieu.

McNaughton's office also prepared at least two speech drafts on July 22 and 27, copies of which are in the Johnson Library, Warnke Papers, McNaughton File. According to Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, p. 598, the author of the July 22 draft was Daniel Ellsberg.

> Nor would surrender in Viet-Nam bring peace, because we learned from Hitler at Munich that success only feeds the appetite of aggression. The battle would be renewed in one country and then another country, bringing with it perhaps even larger and crueler conflict, as we have learned from the lessons of history.
>
> Moreover, we are in Viet-Nam to fulfill one of the most solemn pledges of the American Nation. Three Presidents—President Eisenhower, President Kennedy, and your present President—over 11 years have committed themselves and have promised to help defend this small and valiant nation.
>
> Strengthened by the promise, the people of South Viet-Nam have fought for many long years. Thousands of them have died. Thousands more have been crippled and scarred by war. We just cannot now dishonor our word, or abandon our commitment, or leave those who believed us and who trusted us to the terror and repression and murder that would follow.

The goal of the U.S., the President added, was, first, "to convince the Communists that we cannot be defeated by force of arms or by superior power." He said he had asked Westmoreland what he needed, and that, "We will meet his needs." Without any explanation, he announced that the 1st Air Cavalry Division with supporting forces was being ordered that day to go to Vietnam, thereby raising the total of U.S. forces from 75,000 to 125,000. "Additional forces will be needed later," he added, "and they will be sent as requested." He said he was not going to call up the Reserves, but would increase the draft from 17,000 to 35,000 a month.

The President said that he did not "find it easy to send the flower of our youth, our finest young men, into battle," but ". . . as long as there are men who hate and destroy, we must have the courage to resist, or we will see it all, all that we have built, all that we hope to build, all of our dreams for freedom, all, *all* will be swept away on the flood of conquest. So, too, this shall not happen. We will stand in Viet-Nam." (emphasis in original) [141]

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[141] This was President Johnson's explanation in his memoirs of the reasons he decided to approve Westmoreland's request (*The Vantage Point,* p. 151-152):

"First, from all the evidence available to me it seemed likely that all of Southeast Asia would pass under Communist control, slowly or quickly, but inevitably, at least down to Singapor but almost certainly to Djakarta. I realize that some Americans believe they have, through talking with one another, repealed the domino theory. In 1965 there was no indication in Asia, or from Asians, that this was so. On both sides of the line between Communist and non-Communist Asia the struggle for Vietnam and Laos was regarded as a struggle for the fate of Southeast Asia. The evidence before me as President confirmed the previous assessments of President Eisenhower and of President Kennedy.

"Second, I knew our people well enough to realize that if we walked away from Vietnam and let Southeast Asia fall, there would follow a divisive and destructive debate in our country. This had happened when the Communists took power in China. But that was very different from the Vietnam conflict. We had a solemn treaty commitment to Southeast Asia. We had an international agreement on Laos made as late as 1962 that was being violated flagrantly. We had the word of three Presidents that the United States would not permit this aggression to succeed. A divisive debate about 'who lost Vietnam' would be, in my judgment, even more destructive to our national life than the argument over China had been. It would inevitably increase isolationist pressures from the right and the left and cause a pulling back from our commitments in Europe and the Middle East as well as in Asia.

"Third, our allies not just in Asia but throughout the world would conclude that our word was worth little or nothing. Those who had counted so long for their security on American commmitments would be deeply shaken and vulnerable.

"Fourth, knowing what I did of the policies and actions of Moscow and Peking, I was as sure as a man could be that if we did not live up to our commmitment in Southeast Asia and else-

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Once the Communists were convinced that they could not succeed by force, he said, "a peaceful solution is inevitable." ". . . we are going to continue to persist, if persist we must, until death and desolation have led to the same conference table where others could now join us at a much smaller cost."

In response to a question as to whether the decision implied "any change in the existing policy of relying mainly on the South Vietnamese to carry out offensive operations and using American forces to guard American installations and to act as an emergency backup," Johnson replied, "It does not imply any change in policy whatever. It does not imply any change of objective."

Johnson was also asked how long the war might last. He replied that the public should understand that "there is no quick solution to the problem that we face there. I would not want to prophesy or predict whether it would be a matter of months or years or decades." He added that it had also been difficult to predict when World Wars I and II would end.

In response to a question about the effect of the war on the U.S. economy, Johnson said that the U.S. was in an unprecedented period of prosperity, and he saw "no reason for declaring a national emergency" and thus had not done so.[142]

Although he had not been consulted on the President's decision, Gardner Ackley, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers, agreed with this statement about the effects of the war on the economy, based on McNamara's plans, as explained to him personally by McNamara, for a gradual increase in military activity and expenditure. Ackley, in fact, thought the increased role of the U.S. in Vietnam would be a boon for the U.S. economy, at least in the short-run. In a memorandum ("Economic Aspects of Vietnam") to the President on July 30, 1965, he said: "We [the Council] are certainly not saying that a Vietnam crisis is just what the doctor ordered for the American economy in the next 12 months. But on a coldly objective analysis, *the over-all effects are most likely to be favorable to our prosperity.*" (emphasis in original) Moreover, Ackley stated, consideration of a tax increase would be necessary only if the costs of the war approached $10 billion—a possibility, he said, which was "remote," based on McNamara's projections. (Within a year, the cost approached $20 billion.) There was "room for both more butter and, if needed, more guns," even though additional defense expenditures would consume "a chunk" of the anticipated $7 billion growth of tax revenue during the following year.

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where, they would move to exploit the disarray in the United States and in the alliances of the Free World. They might move independently or they might move together. But move they would—whether through nuclear blackmail, through subversion, with regular armed forces, or in some other manner. As nearly as one can be certain of anything, I knew they could not resist the opportunity to expand their control into the vacuum of power we would leave behind us.

"Finally, as we faced the implications of what we had done as a nation, I was sure the United States would not then passively submit to the consequences. With Moscow and Peking and perhaps others moving forward, we would return to a world role to prevent their full takeover of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East—*after* they had committed themselves." (emphasis in original)

[142] Johnson Library, C.F. ND 191/CO 312. For a good account of the subsequent efforts by the Johnson administration to deal with the inflation which was stimulated by the war, especially the question of a tax increase, see Donald F. Kittl, *The Economic Education of Lyndon Johnson: Guns, Butter and Taxes,* ch. 2 in Robert A. Divine (ed.), *The Johnson Years.*

Although Ackley cautioned that there would need to be greater concern for prices and wages, and that "budgetary and tax planning for fiscal 1967 will be affected," he said that, "Nobody can seriously expect that the kind of program you outlined is going to overheat the economy, strain industrial capacity, or generate a consumer buying boom."

Kearns has commented on Johnson's political strategy in playing down the decision to go to war: [143]

> . . . Johnson's strategy—was to tell Congress and the public no more than absolutely necessary. The administration would request an additional appropriations of only $1.8 billion, thus deferring the full revelation of the conflict's mounting costs until the following year. It called for announcing only that fifty thousand troops were to be sent immediately, and folding that announcement into a crowded press conference held at midday to ensure the minimum TV audience. It called for extending enlistments and increasing draft calls rather than mobilizing the reserves. It called, in essence, for initiating a covert full-scale war.

It is important to note, however, that in making a low-key announcement of the decision to send more troops the President was acting in accordance with the advice of Rusk that this might be less apt to create greater solidarity among the Communists, as well as in accordance with the conclusion of the Special National Intelligence Estimate of July 23 that if the announcement were made in a "piecemeal fashion and with no more high level emphasis than necessary, the development of a crisis atmosphere might be mitigated."

In his statement announcing his decision, President Johnson said that he welcomed the help of all nations in seeking peace, and said he was sending a letter to U Thant urging the U.N. to "find ways to halt aggression and to bring peace in Vietnam." [144]

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[143] Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream,* p. 281. See also pp. 282-286 for Kearns' analysis of the way in which Johnson's decision was affected by his personality and his political experience. She concludes:

". . . his choice to go into Vietnam covertly, with force and with overtures of benevolent intentions, was an act of will that almost seems to sum up the character of the man.

"The initial choice to intervene in 1965, including the decision to start with the bombing, probably was not significantly shaped by Johnson's own personality. Given the pressures for action, it is easy to imagine a Kennedy, an Eisenhower, or a Truman making the same choice. On the other hand, it does seem clear that the decision to attempt the coexistence of the Great Society and the war, and the consequent tactics of half-truth and deception, bore Johnson's own personal stamp to a unique degree. It is difficult to imagine another President, even in the same situation, making the same choice. Almost any other President would have decided differently, not necessarily out of principle, but surely on the practical ground that not even a President can 'pull off' the impossible. Perhaps only Johnson would have dared to conceal the cost of the war from senior members of Congress, so that he might receive the Great Society appropriations before the truth came out.

"Probably the fact that he was, in fact, a master of the Congress had allowed him to engage in so complicated and immense an undertaking. The very qualities that had led to Johnson's political and legislative success were precisely those that now operated to destroy him: his inward insistence that the world adapt itself to his goals; his faith in the nation's limitless capacity; his tendency to evaluate all human activity in terms of its political significance; his insistence on translating every disruptive situation into one where bargaining was possible; his reliance on personal touch; his ability to speak to each of his constituent groups on its own terms. All these gifts, instead of sustaining him, now conspired to destroy him."

For interesting comments by William Bundy on the factors that shaped the President's July 1965 decision, as well as the manner in which it was announced, see Michael Charlton and Anthony Moncrieff, *Many Reasons Why* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), pp. 21-22.

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[144] For the text of President Johnson's letter to U Thant, July 28, 1965, see *Public Papers of the Presidents*, Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965, pp. 804-805.

On July 26, William Bundy circulated to Rusk, McNamara, Ball, and McGeorge Bundy a long memorandum of July 24 on "Negotiating and International Actions Concerning Vietnam," which discussed the U.S. and North Vietnamese positions on negotiations, diplomatic efforts planned or underway, possible additional U.S. actions, and possible changes in the U.S. position. Johnson Library NSF Country File, Vietnam. North Vietnam, Bundy said, was "not interested in serious discussions except on the basis of acceptance of its negotiating position." This would involve recognition "in principle" of the North Vietnamese Four Points of April 8. "There is some doubt," he continued, "whether Hanoi also insists on withdrawal of US forces as a precondition of discussions. In addition, latest Hanoi statements seem to be saying that we must stop the bombing and recognize the NLF as a party before they will talk."

With respect to the U.S. position, Bundy said that there was "at least verbal agreement in substantial areas" between the U.S. and North Vietnam:

"(1) We accept the principle of US withdrawal, although we are not prepared to do this until South Vietnam is freed of external interference;

"(2) We agree that South Vietnam should have no military bases or be part of any alliance;

"(3) We agree that there should be no interference between the two Vietnams (though Hanoi added the phrase 'pending reunification', thus attempting to pre-judge the outcome of the reunification issue);

"(4) We agree that reunification should be accomplished by peaceful means (Hanoi makes no mention of any form of elections or determination of the popular will, while we stress, as we always have, that there must be a 'free determination'.)"

"The major differences," he added, "are equally clear":

"(1) Hanoi insists that, before any elections, the NLF takes its place in a Saigon Government, while we refer to Tran Van Do's second point, that the South Vietnamese people should determine their own future 'through established democratic processes' without any interference;

"(2) There is a clear underlying difference as to the timing of U.S. withdrawal—even if Hanoi is not insisting on withdrawal prior to any discussions, it would plainly seek to get us out long before the conditions existed on which we have insisted;

"(3) We have adopted, in Tran Van Do's first point, the principle that there must be eventual withdrawal of 'political and military personnel' introduced from the North (even though we do not insist on this as a condition for cessation of bombing), while Hanoi, in a recent authoritative statement on July 16, takes a position opposing any 'regroupment' of genuine 'southerners.' In other words, Hanoi appears to be laying the groundwork for saying that any southerner is entitled to remain in South Vietnam, even though he may have gone North in 1954 (as key NLF and VC leaders did) and subsequently been trained in Hanoi and infiltrated back into the South."

"The most basic difference, of course," Bundy added, "concerns the absolutely 'gut' issue of admitting the NLF to a Saigon Government (coalition). Hanoi knows perfectly well that this would mean the end of the ball game, particularly in view of the present political divisions and instability in Saigon, and so do we. Any sign of 'give' on either side would signal a truly major concession." According to the memorandum, '. . . if we accept the NLF as an independent party, we are undercutting the whole international law and policy justification of our action in South Vietnam. Moreover, from the standpoint of negotiating results, the moment we recognize the NLF we will be saying that the internal solution in South Vietnam must be some balance of interests between the Saigon Government and the NLF, and in existing and foreseeable circumstances this would amount to a coalition government and Communist takeover—not because the NLF and VC are in fact a majority of the South Vietnamese people, but because their cohesion and tactical skill would almost certainly bring them out on top in any political struggle with the currently divided and disorganized non-Communist elements in Saigon."

With respect to the possibility of another bombing pause, the memorandum said that this could be considered, "if and when some clear indication came from Hanoi that there would be a cessation of infiltration and at least a sharp reduction in military activity and terrorism in the South." (To trade a pause for a simple cessation of infiltration would raise the problem of verification.) There would be the risk that, after such an assurance, infiltration would continue, but violations could be detected, and the admission by the North Vietnamese—through the giving of an assurance—of their responsibility for infiltration would be "a very powerful weapon on our side in sustaining our whole view of the conflict [that is, that North Vietnam was responsible for the war]."

If the Communists ceased fighting, however, they would still be in a position to engage in political action unless steps had been taken in South Vietnam to settle the internal situation by a "comprehensive program" for amnesty, land reform, and free elections. Otherwise, the struggle would be shifted "from the military to the political plane," and the Communists would still be in a position to "win." U.S. forces could not be completely withdrawn, the memorandum added, until there was "a really strong chance that the non-Communist elements would come out on top."

In the memorandum, William Bundy also discussed the question of using the U.N. This course of action, he said, was not likely to produce a real response or change in the North Vietnamese

Continued

On July 29, Goldberg met with U Thant to deliver the President's letter of July 28, to explain the President's decision to send more troops to Vietnam, and to discuss possible U.N. actions. He was instructed to tell U Thant that the U.S. continued to support the idea of a personal appeal by him for a Geneva-type conference in which the first order of business would be to establish conditions for a cease-fire.[145] (On July 19, Rusk had met with U Thant, who said that he did not believe the Security Council could take effective action, and that he was again considering whether he should call for a cease-fire. Rusk replied that a cease-fire would be "very difficult to arrange in the circumstances," but that the U.S. would not object to a call by U Thant for a conference at which a cease-fire would be the first order of business.)[146]

Goldberg was also directed to express interest in the possibility of action by the Security Council, and to suggest to U Thant that he might seek to ascertain whether the U.S.S.R. would agree to a Security Council resolution calling for a Geneva-type conference. Finally, Goldberg was instructed to indicate U.S. interest in U Thant's proposal for admitting North and South Vietnam to the U.N.

On August 2, 1965, the North Vietnamese, rejecting U.N. intercession, stated that, "For the U.S. there is only one way to an honorable peace. That is, to correctly implement the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam" by ceasing the bombing of North Vietnam and withdrawing its forces from the South.[147]

Meanwhile, William Bundy's small working group had concluded that the preferable method for initiating a diplomatic contact with the North Vietnamese would be for an unattributable reliable person (rather than a U.S. official) to contact Mai Van Bo. After further discussion in Washington on July 26 between the President, Rusk, Ball, McNamara and McGeorge Bundy,[148] Ball selected Edmund A. Gullion, then dean of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, and formerly a Foreign Service officer with long experience in dealing with Vietnam, for the assignment. Ball gave it the code-name, "XYZ."[149]

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position, but might contribute to an eventual settlement, and would generate support in the United States and in other countries for U.S. policy in Vietnam.

There were, Bundy said, several ways in which the U.S. could take the initiative in the U.N., the most significant of which would be to seek a Security Council resolution calling for unconditional talks or for the convening of a Geneva-type conference. Another possibility would be to support U Thant's proposal to admit both North and South Vietnam to the U.N. "Everything else in the above list of [seven possible U.S. actions 'to make it clear that we are exhausting all negotiating avenues'] would be at best a further demonstration, on a modest scale, that Hanoi is the obstacle to peace."

[145] For the instructions to Goldberg, see U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, memorandum from Harlan Cleveland to Rusk, July 27, 1965, attaching the State Department cable of instructions to Goldberg, Washington to USUN New York 138, July 27, 1965. For Goldberg's report on his meeting with U Thant, which has been heavily excised, see, in the same location, USUN New York to Washington 191, July 29, 1965.

[146] U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Memorandum of Conversation on July 20, 1965 between Rusk and Sir Patrick Dean, the British Ambassador to the U.S., "Subject: Secretary Rusk's Conversation with U Thant."

[147] *New York Times*, Aug. 3, 1965.

[148] Johnson Library, NSF Aides Files, McGeorge Bundy Memos to the President, Memorandum to the President, July 26, concerning matters to be discussed at the meeting that day of the President and his advisers.

[149] Gullion was referred to as "X," and another former Foreign Service officer, Paul Sturm, who met with Bo after the Gullion mission had apparently failed, was referred to as "Y." There was no "Z." The use of the initials XYZ was based on an affair in U.S.-French diplomacy, known as the "XYZ affair," which occurred in 1797.

Gullion, ostensibly traveling on private business, saw Bo on August 6, 1965.[150] At this first meeting, Gullion discussed the North Vietnamese Four Points of April 8, 1965. He presented to Bo an amended version which had been drafted in April under Ball's direction, in which the only substantial change in the original North Vietnamese version was in Point 3 (which in the North Vietnamese version stated that the South Vietnamese would settle their internal affairs "in accordance with the program of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation"; the amended version provided that the South Vietnamese would settle their internal affairs "in conformity with the principles of self-determination")[151] and expressed the hope that this new formulation could be used as the basis for talks between the U.S. and North Vietnam.

Gullion and Bo met again on August 15 and 18, and U.S. officials were somewhat encouraged by the results of and these sessions between "R" (or "Ruppert") as Bo was being called, and "X," as Gullion was called. At a meeting on September 3, however, Bo insisted that U.S. troops would have to be withdrawn before elections could be held in South Vietnam, and that U.S. bombing of North Vietnam—which he said was, together with U.S. troop increases, an attempt to force the North to negotiate—would have to stop "unilaterally, immediately, totally, and definitively." After this meeting, U.S. efforts to resume the talks were unsuccessful.

Reactions to the President's Decision

Reactions in the United States to the President's July 28 announcement were generally favorable.[152] (Earlier that morning, McGeorge Bundy called John McCloy and Arthur Dean to tell them about the final decision. "They both understood," Bundy said in a memo to the President, "and approved of the international reasons for not blowing the thing up to the level of option 4 [the calling up of Reserves, etc.]. Dean is going full steam, and McCloy is doing what he can to help him.")[153] Even Walter Lippmann concluded that the decision made by the President was "realistic, and as a result, the American position is strengthened and improved." He approved of the President's choice of a limited and defensive war, as well as the decision to seek a negotiated peace.[154]

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[150] There had been an earlier contact (July 16) with Mai Van Bo by a private American, Urah Arkas-Duntov, a New York businessman, and an acquaintance of Ball, but it was not, according to William Bundy and George Ball, "organically linked to XYZ." Letter to CRS from William Bundy, Apr. 20, 1988. Contrary to the implication in the *Pentagon Papers* negotiating volumes (p. 78 of Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*), and Herring's own statement (p. 74) that "the administration eagerly seized the opening" provided by Arkas-Duntov, the decision to initiate the XYZ contact was made on July 26, before the report from Arkas-Duntov was received on July 29.

[151] For the "talking points" prepared for Gullion for his meetings with Bo, as well as his reports on each meeting, see the XYZ Chronology in Herring, *The Secret Diplomacy of the Vietnam War*. This is the text (from p. 9 of the XYZ Chronology) of the amended (American) version of the Four Points which Gullion presented to Bo (for the original North Vietnamese version see p. 218 above):

"Point I—The basic rights of the Vietnamese people to peace, independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity are recognized as set forth in the Geneva Accords of 1954. Obtaining compliance with the essential principles in the Accords is an appropriate subject for immediate, international discussions without preconditions and subsequent negotiations. Such discussions and negotiations should consider, among other things, appropriate means, including agreed stages, for the withdrawal of foreign military and quasi-military personnel and weapons from South and North Vietnam; the dismantling of foreign military bases in both areas; the cancellation of military alliances in contravention of the Accords; and the regrouping and redeployment of indigneous forces.

"Point II—Strict compliance with the military provisions of the Geneva Accords must be achieved in accordance with schedules and appropriate safeguards to be agreed upon in the said discussions and subsequent negotiations.

"Point III—The internal affairs of South and North Vietnam must be settled by the South and North Vietnamese people themselves in conformity with the principles of self-determination without any foreign interference.

"Point IV—The issue of reunification of Vietnam must be decided peacefully, on the basis of free determination by the people of South and North Vietnam without foreign interference."

[152] For the reaction of North Vietnam and of the National Liberation Front to the President's July 28 statement see U.S. Department of State, Central File, Pol 27 Viet S, Saigon to Washington 380, Aug. 5, 1965, and 402, Aug. 7, 1965.

Unfortunately, neither the Gallup Poll nor the Harris Survey conducted a poll of the public's opinion of the President's decision. (Did they, too, believe that it was not a change of policy, and that it was not important enough to warrant a poll?) Based on a Gallup poll released at the end of August, however (which probably was taken in mid-August), the public appeared to be somewhat more approving of the way the President was handling the situation:

> *"Do you approve or disapprove of the way the Johnson Administration is handling the situation in Viet Nam?"*

[In percent]

	Late August, 1965	*Mid-July, 1965*	*Mid-June, 1965*
Approve	57	52	48
Disapprove	25	26	28
No Opinion	18	22	[155] 24

In Congress, the reaction to Johnson's July 28 announcement, though favorable, was also somewhat muted, in part because of the low-key way in which he made the announcement, as well as the restrained and limited nature of the decision itself. As reported by E. W. Kenworthy of the *New York Times:* "Most members of Congress received President Johnson's statement on the Vietnam crisis today [July 28] with a sense of relief. First, there was general satisfaction that the President had decided to increase the draft and postpone a decision on calling up reserve units. Second, there was approval of his avowal to seek an honorable resolution of the conflict through the United Nations."[156]

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[153] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces.

[154] *Washington Post,* July 30, 1965. See, however, Lippmann's views in his column for July 27, p. 432, fn. 134 above.

Major newspapers generally supported the July 1965 decision. In an editorial on July 29, 1965, the *New York Times* concluded that, "Despite the deep difficulties of the present and the tremendous implications for the future, few Americans will quarrel with President Johnson's determined conclusion to hold on in Vietnam." "This is quite different," the paper said, "from saying we will bring the other side to its knees." The war could go on for years or decades, and it was "vital" for it to be "held down to the absolute minimum necessary to prove to Hanoi and Peiping that military aggression is not worth while and never will be."

The *Washington Post* also supported the President in an editorial on July 29: "Within the United States we surmise that the response to the President's speech will be overwhelmingly favorable. Despite the innate hatred of war, most of the people are aware of the kind of world we live in. They appear to be reconciled to a hard struggle in a faraway land because of the close relation it has to the preservation of our own freedom." "The gist of what the President had to say," the paper commented, "is that the United States places such a high value on peace that it is willing to fight for it. The spread of Asia communism by terror and slaughter is the antithesis of both peace and freedom. The United States has attempted to provide a shield against this menace. It is now called upon to demonstrate that this shield is not an illusion."

[155] *Washington Post,* Aug. 27, 1965. In the late August poll, 46 percent of Republicans approved, compared to 63 percent of the Democrats; 35 percent of the Republicans disapproved, compared to 17 percent of the Democrats.

Mansfield, Cooper, and Javits praised the President for his restraint and his willingness to continue to explore a negotiated settlement. Cooper said that the President's decision not to declare a national emergency or call up the Reserves, "indicates that the President wants the world to know that the United States does not intend that our troops shall undertake the primary responsibility of South Vietnam to defend itself, and that our country will continue to exercise restraint against the expansion of action into a major war."

Javits said the President's statement was "restrained and considered, while resolute," but that further troop increases could be expected, and a new resolution of congressional support "would be the best way in which to consolidate the Nation in its resoluteness on Vietnam and give the Nation reassurance as to the size and nature of our likely commitment there."

Mansfield praised the President for consulting with Congress, saying, ". . . I know of no President who has consulted more with Congress than has Lyndon B. Johnson." He added: ". . . these discussions are on a give and take basis and everyone is free to express his opinions, whatever they may be." The President, Mansfield concluded, was "doing his very best, and that is all that any one man can do."

In the CBS/TV program "Face the Nation" on August 1, Senator Russell said that the President's actions ". . . were about right for the conditions as we find them today," but that "the situation in Vietnam presents the most frustrating problem that has ever confronted the American people." The U.S., Russell said, had committed "every conceivable blunder" in Vietnam. "Our greatest mistake there," he added, "has been in over-emphasizing the military and not putting sufficient emphasis on the civilian side." Turning to the question of Vietnam's importance, Russell said:

> I think that as of today that the loss of South Vietnam would very largely—would be a worse blow to our world prestige and to our reputation for keeping our word under all conditions than it would be from either a strategic or a tactical or an economic standpoint. I don't think it [Vietnam] has any value strategically. . . .

Russell continued: "I am fairly familiar with the domino theory that if South Vietnam falls that all the others fall. I don't think that is necessarily true."[157]

Other Senators voiced their support of the President, including Thomas Kuchel, who was the Republican whip, Dodd, Lausche, and McGee, as well as Proxmire, a liberal Democrat, and moderate-liberal Democrats Moss, Harris, and A. S. Mike Monroney. Aiken also praised the President's emphasis on seeking a negotiated settlement of the war.[158]

Proxmire said, "It is necessary to make the kind of commitment in force that will prove that the President means it when he says that we will fight if we have to, however long it may take to fulfill whatever commitment the United States must make. Only this kind of concrete action will really convince the Communists that the losses they will suffer—the economic devastation—if they persist in this aggression—will not be worth while. Only this really makes negotiations and peace sensible to them."

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[156] *New York Times*, July 29, 1965.
[157] The text of the program is in *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 19674-19675.
[158] See *ibid.*, pp. 18815-18816, 18823, 18861-18863, 18938-18941.

McGee stressed the historic responsibility of the United States for "reshaping the balance of power":

> . . . the central issue remains the same—that of the willingness of those with power but bent upon peace to use that power in behalf of peace. History has thrust us into this role. We did not seek it. We do not want it. But the tides of change in our time have swept us up with these alternatives and these requirements. We have no choice save one. That is to forfeit both the responsibility and the opportunity for reshaping the balance of power of the new 20th century world to governments and philosophies and forces hostile to the basic principles of peace and human freedom. . . .
>
> . . . against the backdrop of the cold war years, our policy in Vietnam is but another logical and necessary commitment within the same framework of national interest and international responsibility as were Iran, Greece, Berlin, Korea, and—in one sense—even Cuba.

McGee continued:

> . . . the greatest threat to the peace of the world today lies in this insidious doctrine of wars of national liberation, this clandestine form of international aggression which is facing its climactic test in Vietnam today.
>
> If it succeeds in Vietnam, it will be taken as proof that it can succeed elsewhere.
>
> If it succeeds in Vietnam, it will be taken as hard evidence that militant violence is a better way to promote communism than competitive coexistence.
>
> But if it fails in Vietnam, the policy of promoting "wars of national liberation" will be dealt a bloody-blow everywhere. So let us be very, very clear what may be well at stake here and now.

The policy which had been developed to combat the Communists and to help reshape the power balance, McGee said, was the Truman doctrine. It had worked successfully in Greece, in Berlin, and in Korea, and, "The fact that aggression in Vietnam is dressed up in the false doctrine of 'wars of national liberation' does not make the Truman doctrine any less relevant than it was in 1947." He added: "We stand in Vietnam now for the same reason we stood in Greece and Turkey. That reason is right. It is just. It is moral. And if we have the endurance—which I know we have—it will turn out as it has turned out in the past—successfully."

Support for the President was also voiced by leaders and Members of the House of Representatives in a series of speeches arranged and prepared by the administration, beginning with Majority Leader Albert, who stated: [159]

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[159] For statements by Albert and others in the House see *ibid.*, pp. 18661-18789, *passim*.

> . . . For us to fail to meet the commitment entirely would be to fail the 70,000 or 80,000 American boys who are already fighting and assisting the South Vietnamese people. Such an abandonment would say to other nations that our pledged word in the face of Communist aggression is good—but only up to a point. Faith in the value of our word would be seriously weakened, most immediately in southeast Asia but also in the rest of Asia and throughout the world.
>
> Such an abandonment would say to the other Communist nations that if the United States is pushed hard enough, it will back off from its firm commitments. It would give to those Communist leaders who are closely watching the Vietnam conflict the green light to initiate subversive aggression against their neighbors. We would then be faced with choosing to fight in a number of places or in choosing to accept a growing number of implacably hostile regimes much closer to our shores.

Other House Democrats expressed their support, including the chairmen of Appropriations (Mahon), Foreign Affairs (Morgan), and Armed Services (Rivers), and other senior House Democrats, including Sikes, Ray J. Madden (D/Ind.), Ed Edmondson (D/Okla.), Clement J. Zablocki (D/Wisc.), Abraham J. Multer (D/N.Y.), and Hébert.

There was a conspicuous silence, however, from the Republicans, who were only too willing to let the Democrats take responsibility for greater U.S. involvement in the war and the use of large-scale ground forces. Dirksen, reiterating his support for the President, said that he would have liked more emphasis on the strategic importance of South Vietnam to the U.S., while Ford said he supported the President's "firmness against Communist aggression."[160] Laird said he would support the President because opposition might cause a miscalculation by the Communists which could lead to a major war.[161] A few days later, Ford said that Congress should be asked to declare war: "It would be the honest thing to do under the circumstances, considering our present commitment." He recognized that such a declaration might have consequences for U.S. legal and political relations with other countries, but said that these could be weighed by Congress.[162]

Leading Democratic critics in Congress also generally refrained from commenting on the speech and the decision to send more troops.[163] Morse, however, denounced the decision, saying, "If

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[160] *New York Times,* July 29, 1965.

[161] *Washington Post,* July 29, 1965.

[162] *Ibid.,* Aug. 6, 1965.

[163] The small group of about 25-35 House Members, almost entirely liberal Democrats, who had been urging the Foreign Affairs Committee to hold hearings on Vietnam, met on July 27 under the leadership of Donald Fraser, Benjamin Rosenthal, and Don Edwards, and expressed their opposition to troop increases. *Ibid.,* July 28, 1965. They did not speak on this subject in the House, however. On the evening of July 28, McNaughton and Unger met with 30 "restive Congressmen"—Chester Cooper's words in a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy on July 29. Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam. Present were the following Democrats:

California: George Brown, Philip Burton, Ronald Cameron, Jeffery Cohelan, James C. Corman, Don Edwards, Edward R. Roybal

Delaware: Harris McDowell

Florida: Sam Gibbons

Hawaii: Spark M. Matsunaga

Continued

American boys are killed in an undeclared war, it is murder. . . . It is an elementary principle of criminal law that when a life is taken in the commission of an illegal act it falls into the category of homicide. I have no intention of becoming an accomplice to homicide in southeast Asia."

Morse continued: [164]

> The President of the United States should be required to either conduct a war in Asia in accordance with the terms and conditions of a declaration of war, or he should be prevented by the Congress from making war.
>
> If neither Congress nor the President are willing to act within the framework of the Constitution, the people of the United States should make clear to both the Congress and the President and demand that procedures provided for in the Constitution remain inviolate. . . .
>
> . . . if the President of the United States is allowed to continue to make war without a declaration of war, Congress will be jeopardizing our system of constitutional government based upon three coordinate and coequal branches of government.
>
> I warn the American people again today that if they continue to let this President, or any President, take executive powers free from the checks of the Constitution of the United States, they are on the way to losing their freedoms and liberties. History teaches that as a government of executive supremacy is built up—I do not care what label one attaches to that government—the people cannot remain free, because under a government of executive supremacy the people will be victimized by the arbitrary discretion of a one-man rule.

Albert Gore of Tennessee, a moderate Democrat and a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, also was critical of the decision to send more troops and to expand the war: [165]

> We now find ourselves involved in a war that defies analysis in traditional military terms; in a war that makes little sense as it is being waged; in a war that we have scant hope of winning except at a cost which far outweighs the fruits of victory; in a war fought on a battlefield suitable to the enemy, in a place and under conditions that no military man in his right mind would choose; in a war which threatens to escalate into a

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Illinois: Dan Rostenkowski, Sidney Yates
Indiana: John Brademas
Maryland: Clarence Long
Michigan: Lucien Nedzi, Paul Todd, Weston Vivian
Minnesota: Donald Fraser
Missouri: William L. Hungate
Montana: Arnold Olsen
New Jersey: Henry Helstoski
New York: John Dow, Benjamin Rosenthal, Herbert Tenzer, Lester L. Wolff
Pennsylvania: William S. Moorhead, George M. Rhodes
Washington: Floyd V. Hicks
Wisconsin: Robert W. Kastenmeier, Henry S. Reuss

According to Cooper's memorandum, "Two matters were high on the list of things that troubled them: Why were we adamant in not dealing with the Viet Cong? Why didn't we use the United Nations as both a forum and a peacekeeping force? (The President's speech [July 28] seemed to have mollified them somewhat on the latter point.)"

[164] *CR*, vol. 111, pp. 18545-18546.

[165] *Ibid.*, pp. 18571-18572.

> major power confrontation and which could escalate into nuclear holocaust.

Despite his opposition to the war, Gore said he was encouraged that the President had emphasized negotiations, and that he seemed to want to avoid involving U.S. forces in a major land war in Asia.

Several days later, Morse, in the course in another speech on the subject, raised the question of impeachment. He said that in his speaking engagements around the country since the President announced his decision, "I have been asked by more people than I would have thought possible if there are not grounds for impeachment of the President. . . . Most of these people see the President as waging an executive war in violation of the Constitution. They think the impeachment clauses of the Constitution must apply to such a case." Morse said he disagreed with this suggestion, but added, ". . . it is not at all surprising for people in the country who think the President is following an unconscionable and illegal course of action in South Vietnam to turn to the Constitution and look for what procedural protection they have."[166]

The feeling of fatalism, of powerlessness, on the part of many Members of Congress as the United States went to war in Vietnam was mirrored by the feelings among some officials in the executive branch who had been associated with Vietnam policymaking for many years, a few of whom registered their dissent at the time. At the White House, the one self-confessed "dove," James Thomson, drafted a memorandum to McGeorge Bundy on July 28, 1965, which he did not complete or send. The title, following up on his February 19, 1965 memorandum to Bundy ("The Vietnam Conflict—One Dove's Lament"), was, "The Vietnam Conflict—One Dove's Further Lament,"[167] and this was what Thomson said in his draft:

> . . . I am struck by a sense that we are at a turning point in Vietnam—perhaps have passed it—that will at least decide for a generation to come our relations with all of Asia, and may well have more permanent implications for the kind of society we are and the kind of world that survives us. Perhaps there is no turning back: we begin from where we are, heirs to the mistakes of others and our own mistakes, creatures of our clumsy but well-intentioned planning, captives of our own rhetoric and politics and ever-expanding commitments. . . .
>
> . . . As I read the history, we have wobbled almost accidentally onto this chunk of terrain—now the pathetic touchstone of our "national honor." We have done so through what we regarded as the debacle of the 1954 Conference, then the "miracle" of Diem; but never was our prestige and power fully committed until the Kennedy decision of the autumn of 1961. Why such a decision? Domestic and personal considerations aside, it was the result, I am convinced, of a misreading of Vietnamese history and a misreading of Communist China.
>
> Since then we have become worldwide purveyors of the dominoe fallacy—and have dug ever deeper our own hole.

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[166] *Ibid.*, pp. 19131, 19374. See also pp. 20591-20592.

[167] Kennedy Library, Thomson Papers, "Southeast Asia-Vietnam," 1965-General.

> Does American "national honor" really stand or fall on what happens in Vietnam? Patently no. But lamentably yes, if only relatively, as a direct result of our own rhetoric and actions.
>
> Little we have said publicly about the Vietnam conflict—and little we have said internally—has contributed to wise thinking or wise policy. Most especially not the implied analogies from history. Vietnam is no Czechoslovakia of 1938, no Greece or Turkey of 1947, no Malaysia of 1948, not even Serbia of 1914, certainly not Korea in 1950, nor Cuba in 1962. The fact of the matter is that in some past situations—and in some future situations (e.g. Indonesia)—the leadership of national revolutions may well be seized by Communists. Does that then make such national revolutions the proper focus for some American *jihad*? Have we learned nothing about time, change, and erosion, or the power of nationalism to mold and transform Communism?
>
> And preserve us from the dominoes! Vietnam is not Laos; it is not Cambodia, Thailand, Burma, the Philippines, Taiwan, Korea, or Japan. Every one of these places is strikingly different (even if their residents all "look alike"). Yet how much damage we have done to stability in these places—not to mention public understanding here and abroad—by our self-fulfilling rhetoric.
>
> Preserve us as well from the legal contract: "We gave our word." To whom? When? Why? Under what circumstances? The Eisenhower letter to Diem is the weakest of reeds on which to rest our present involvement. Vietnam is fast becoming a triumph of our "word" and our "national honor" over our national interest.

Thomson said that the U.S. was paying a "high price" in Asia:

> . . . a massive if so far unsuccessful bribe for Filipino mercenaries; a similar arrangement with the Koreans; encouragement of adventurist tendencies on the part of the GRC [Government of the Republic of China] in the Taiwan Strait and Southeast Asia; a compounding of bad relations with the Indonesians, Cambodians, and even the Burmese; and the alienation of significant sectors of the Japanese and Indian public.

"At the heart of our Vietnam commitment," Thomson added, "is the rehabilitation of the once-moribund Dulles policy towards Communist China . . . through a combination of ignorance, discounting, misunderstanding, exaggeration, belittling, and fear of Communist China."

At the State Department, Robert Johnson sent Rostow a memorandum on July 22, "Where Are We Going in Vietnam?" in which he, too, questioned the direction of U.S. policy:[168] "I suppose that I share with a number of other people a feeling of considerable helplessness and futility with respect to Vietnam. On the one hand, I have the gravest doubts that our present policy direction can produce success. On the other hand, I recognize that we are so committed to it that to suggest change seems very unrealistic. In other words, I find myself transfixed between the unrealism of our policy and the unrealism of change." "As we contemplate a much greater commitment of U.S. ground strength in Vietnam we face once more the persistent question of whether modern U.S. military power can be made sufficiently relevant in Vietnam to prevent defeat in a guerrilla war we are presently losing. My own view is that we can use U.S. ground forces to keep from being driven out of South Vietnam but that we cannot win. In other words, a stalemate is the most likely outcome."

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[168] Kennedy Library, Thomson Papers.

Johnson said that although he was against further troop increases, he recognized that they were going to occur. This being the case, he advocated a plan to achieve a "less costly stalemate," by which U.S. forces would control coastal areas and avoid participating in direct counterguerrilla (pacification) actions. Air attacks on the North would be suspended, both to encourage negotiations and in recognition that such attacks had not been and could not be effective. To avoid being characterized "in the eyes of the world as a clumsy, unthinking brutal giant, unable to deal with weaker folk except by destroying all those who stand in his path," the U.S. should also avoid air attacks in South Vietnam on innocent civilians.

This plan of "restrained involvement" might produce diplomatic results, Johnson said, if the U.S. indicated to the North that it was willing to compromise. And although the outcome might be a "compromise," a compromise at a low price would be preferable to a high-priced stalemate ending in compromise.

Another reaction to the July 28 decision came from a politician who had a personal reason, based on his own experience, to take such a position. Mark O. Hatfield, governor of Oregon, who had witnessed the poverty and suffering of the Vietnamese and their hatred of the French while serving as a U.S. naval officer in World War II,[169] and who was later to become an active opponent of the war in the U.S. Senate, was at a national governors' conference in Minneapolis when the President made his announcement. A resolution of support for the President's policies in Vietnam was offered during the conference by one of the governors. According to Hatfield, who asked for an explanation of the resolution, ". . . there was great resentment that I immediately felt in the room that anyone should even ask for a specification . . . of the resolution, because in effect it was to affirm our American mission in Southeast Asia." When the resolution was put to a voice vote, Hatfield voted no. (With the possible exception of Governor George Romney of Michigan, who told reporters he had also voted no, Hatfield's was the only opposing vote.) Afterward, one of the governors remarked, according to Hatfield, that "I had done a disservice to my country in not making it a unanimous resolution." [170]

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[169] See p. 1 of pt. I of this study.

[170] The description of events and the quotations used here are from the CRS Interview with Mark Hatfield, Jan. 11, 1979, and the *New York Times*, July 30, 1965. Hatfield also describes these events in his book, *Not Quite So Simple* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), pp. 156-159. Hatfield's own position was that the Vietnam problem should be taken up by the U.N., and, if that did not prove successful and the war were to spread, that Congress should be asked to declare war. The *Washington Post*, in an editorial on July 28, called these ideas "fanciful illusions . . . a midsummer night's dream."

Following the conference, the President had all of the governors flown to Washington in Air Force One for a White House briefing on Vietnam on July 29. After the meeting with the President, Rusk, McNamara, and U.N. Ambassador Goldberg, Hatfield again stated publicly—the only one of the 50 governors to do so—his concern about the growing involvement of the United States in the Vietnam war.

At about the same time, Marriner Eccles, a Republican and a prominent businessman, who had been one of the members of the committee of leading business men created during the 1964 campaign to support Johnson's election,[171] attended a meeting at the White House, along with about 70 other prominent business leaders who had been on the committee, at which the President, Rusk, and McNamara, briefed them on Vietnam. According to Eccles' biographer, "It quickly became apparent that . . . the object was to convert the 1964 'independent committee' into a source of support for the Johnson administration's escalation of American intervention in the Vietnam conflict." After a number of those present expressed their support for Johnson's policy, Eccles voiced his opposition. There was a "stunned silence." The President asked Rusk if he wanted to reply. Rusk said he had stated his position. "The response from the group was a collective sigh of relief." (That was the last White House function Marriner Eccles was invited to attend.) [172]

Conclusion

Since 1945, every President and every Congress had supported the policy of using U.S. power to prevent Communist domination of Vietnam and of Southeast Asia,[173] and for President Johnson and most of his associates, as well as for many if not most Members of Congress, the decision in July 1965 to send large-scale American forces into battle was viewed as implementing that policy, while deterring Communist wars of national liberation in other parts of the world and making the power and the commitments of the United States credible to other nations." [174]

These views generally prevailed also among prominent American leaders, as represented by the position of the Wise Men that there were such "grave stakes" involved, and the situation was so critical, that the U.S. had to make "whatever combat force increases were required."

Among the "defense intellectuals," those academicians and others who served as civilian strategists for the Pentagon, there was also widespread support for the President's decision. One of the principal strategic theorists of the period, Bernard Brodie, said later that he knew of no one among the civilian strategists "who by the end of 1965 had manifested any misgivings about the course that President Johnson had embarked upon." On the contrary, he said, for some of them, "it was precisely the kind of application of their ideas which they could not help but relish." [175]

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[171] See pt. II, ch. 5 of this study.

[172] Sidney Hyman, *Marriner S. Eccles, Private Entrepreneur and Public Servant* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 413-414.

[173] For one interpretation of the strategic considerations involved see W. W. Rostow, "The Strategic Significance of Vietnam and Southeast Asia," pp. 33-52 in *Vietnam in Remission*, edited by James F. Veninga and Harry A. Wilmer (College Station, Tex.: Texas A & M Univ. Press, 1985).

[174] In a speech at the National War College on Aug. 17, 1965, which is still classified, Ball defended the decision to send U.S. forces, saying that it was "inevitable" and that he saw no alternative. (A copy of the speech is in Ball's papers at the Department of State.)

In a discussion on Aug. 4, 1965, Ball told James Reston of the *New York Times*, when Reston expressed doubts about the scope and seriousness of the review conducted by the President during July 21-27, that it was the most comprehensive and intensive since the Cuban missile crisis, and that "all participants were in full accord with the program finally approved." U.S. Department of State, Lot File 70 D 217, "Press Reports During Period July 31-Aug. 6, 1965."

Henry A. Kissinger, a member of the faculty at Harvard University, whose reputation as a strategist was instrumental in his selection for several Vietnam war assignments with the Johnson administration and his appointment by President Nixon as his national security adviser and later as Secretary of State, was among those who supported U.S. intervention in Vietnam. After a trip to Vietnam in August of 1966 on assignment from the State Department to recommend improvements in U.S. policy and operations, Kissinger said in a letter to Ambassador Lodge on August 18: [176]

> Vietnam has become the hinge of our national efforts. If we fail there, I foresee decades of mounting crisis. If we succeed it will mark a historic turning point in the postwar era. Just as the Cuban-Berlin confrontation may have convinced the Soviets of the futility of seeking political breakthroughs by military means, so Vietnam can put an end to Chinese expansionism by the use or threat of force.

Could the U.S. "win," that is, by going to war could it realize the objectives which it sought to achieve by so doing? President Johnson appears to have been ambivalent. While exhibiting confidence in the efficacy of American power and in his own power of persuasion,[177] he seems to have been unsure that U.S. forces could effec-

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[175] Bernard Brodie, "Why Were We So (Strategically) Wrong?" *Foreign Policy*, 5 (Winter 1971-72), pp. 151-163 at 158. For a critique of the role of civilian strategists in the escalation of the Vietnam war in 1965, see the article by Colin S. Gray (to which Brodie was replying), "What RAND Hath Wrought," *Foreign Policy*, 4 (Fall 1971), pp. 111-129.

According to another analysis by Brodie, ("Technology, Politics, and Strategy," in *Problems of Modern Strategy* [New York: Praeger for the Institute for Strategic Studies, 1970], pp. 171-172), "It is remarkable how few of the pitfalls we have encountered in Vietnam were taken into account in the kinds of war games, scenarios, and cost-effectiveness analyses done at places like RAND over the past twenty years. Nobody engaged in these pursuits warned us of the pitfalls involved in attempting to support through military action a regime or series of regimes which show a high denominator of corruption and ineptitude and which have in any case failed utterly to attract the allegiance of the people. Certainly no one warned us about the possibility of getting into a bind where we could neither escalate, nor de-escalate, nor extricate ourselves from an impossible situation. . . . Nor do I remember that we ever took into account what frustrations from denial of victory or at least of clearly visible progress might mean with respect to the attitudes of other peoples who who were simply witnessing what was going on." Brodie added, however, that Guy Pauker of the Social Science Division of the RAND Corporation predicted that U.S. military intervention in Vietnam would not succeed.

Another leading defense intellectual, Thomas Schelling, a member of the faculty at Harvard University, commented some years later: "Whatever the reason why the United States got into Vietnam the ultimate reason that we were in there from late 1965 until the time we finally evacuated was that nobody could think of a graceful way of getting out. The reason for being there, and it appealed to me, was 'I wish now, with hindsight, that we hadn't done it, but now that we're here, among all the options, cutting and going just doesn't look good.' " Stanley Hoffmann, et al., "Vietnam Reappraised," *International Security*, 6 (Summer 1981), p. 17.

[176] A copy of this letter is in the files at CMH. The author was unable to find it in the State Department files.

[177] According to Doris Kearns, "The decision to escalate, although ultimately disastrous, was probably inevitable, given Johnson's nature and convictions: his belief that a Communist victory would be a serious defeat for Americans, that no problem was insoluble, that Americans could do anything. . . . his show of force could convince Hanoi to come to the bargaining table. No small power could possibly resist America's sophisticated technology and enormous strength."

Continued

tively fight the kind of war which they were entering, as well as whether the American people would support such a war for as long as it might have to be waged in order to be considered successful.[178] But he appears to have accepted the major arguments for intervention propounded by his advisers.[179] He also had an important reason of his own: he did not want to be the President who "lost Vietnam."

Although there were differences among policymakers with respect to whether the U.S. could win, and what could be won, the assumption that the Communists would have a "breaking point," which had been buttressed by the various concepts of "compellence" and "coercive warfare" developed for the Pentagon by Thomas C. Schelling of Harvard University, Herman Kahn of the Hudson Institute and others, appears to have been widely held by those involved in making the decision.[180] As Bill Moyers, one of President Johnson's closest associates at the time of the February decision to bomb and the July decision to send troops, who was a participant in both proceedings and supported both decisions, said in a later interview: "There was a belief that if we indicated a willingness to use our power, they would get the message and back away from an all-out confrontation. . . . There was a confidence—it was never bragged about, it was just there—a residue, perhaps of the confrontation over the missiles in Cuba—that when the chips were really down, the other people would fold." ". . . you keep raising your stakes," he added, "because you don't see how that other fellow could possibly be a match for you; he must be bluffing." [181]

Several years later, Dean Rusk reflected on the validity of the assumption that the North Vietnamese would yield: [182]

> I personally underestimated the resistance and the determination of the North Vietnamese. They've taken over 700,000 killed which in relation to population is almost the equivalent

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"Johnson," Kearns added, "assumed that in war, as in the Senate, every one knew the rules of the game, what kind of agreement would be reasonable, and that eventually an agreement would be reached. . . . Johnson had grounded his actions all his life on the conviction that every man had his price. That must also be true of Ho Chi Minh. . . ." Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream*, pp. 263-266.

[178] Apparently based on his own notes made at the time, Richard Goodwin reports that at a meeting on July 14, 1965, (which may have been the meeting to consider establishing the public committee to support U.S. efforts in the war), the President commented, "Vietnam is like being in a plane without a parachute when all the engines go out. If you jump, you'll probably be killed, and if you stay in you'll crash and probably burn." Richard N. Goodwin, "President Lyndon B. Johnson: The War Within," *New York Times Magazine*, Aug. 21, 1988.

Goodwin, drawing on the work (see p. 248, fn. 84 above) of Doris Kearns (he is now her husband), contends in this article and in the book from which it was adapted, *Remembering America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1988), that Johnson was beginning in the summer of 1965 to exhibit paranoid tendencies and that this was "infecting the entire process of Presidential decision." Goodwin does not indicate whether or how the making of the decision to send more troops to Vietnam, which he, Goodwin, appears also to have supported, may have been affected, nor does he support the proposition that these tendencies were unique to Lyndon Johnson rather than being, as others would argue a generalized pattern of behavior of Presidents under stress, with allowances for differences between Presidents depending on the circumstances and on their personalities.

[179] As the *New York Times* commentator Tom Wicker later said, "He would look around him and see in Bob McNamara that it was technologically possible, in McGeorge Bundy that it was intellectually respectable, and in Dean Rusk that it was historically necessary." Quoted in Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, p. 530.

[180] See p. 118 above.

[181] "Bill Moyers Talks About the War and LBJ, An Interview," *Atlantic* (July 1968).

[182] NBC-TV Interview, July 21, 1971.

> of—what? Ten million Americans? And they continue to come. I thought that when we had established a position in Vietnam which would be clearly impossible for them to overrun militarily that then the chances were very high that they would pull back—maybe only for a time—but pull back or take part in some serious negotiation.

Similar opinions have been expressed by two of the general officers who were principally responsible for U.S. Army strategy and operations in Vietnam in 1965, Generals William DePuy and Bruce Palmer, DePuy said in an interview, "I guess my biggest surprise, and this was a surprise in which I have lots of company, was that the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong would continue the war under the punishment that they took. I guess I should have expected that. I guess I should have studied human nature and should have known it, but I didn't. I really thought that the kind of pressure they were under would have caused them to, perhaps, knock off the war for a while, as a minimum, or even give up and go back north. But I was completely wrong on that." [183]

The Communists, DePuy added,

> . . . were able simply to avoid enough direct confrontations so they could survive. They metered out their casualties, and when the casualties were getting too high, as for example in '66 and '67 and then again in TET [the Communist offensive in 1968], they just backed off and waited. They came back later under circumstances in which they could afford it. Now. I wish that we had all been smart enough to say in 1965, when we went in, that that's what they were going to do to us, because if we had been that smart maybe we wouldn't have gone in it. We did intervene on behalf of a very weak and dubious regime, albeit better than communism, but very dubious in terms of political weight and meaning. But, I don't remember anybody saying that. Do you? Nobody. Not even the experts, not even the scholastics and academics said that. Oh! There's one who did, Francois Sully, who's dead. He did. Now, the reason he did is because he had been through it with the French. He told me and he told others. He said, "You're never going to win it. Never going to win it. You're not going to find them. You're going to thrash around and you're only going to fight the battles they win." Well, he wasn't quite right. He wasn't right in every detail but he was right in net and sum.

DePuy, who believes that the U.S. made a mistake in not establishing an anti-infiltration cordon across the top part of South Vietnam, as the Army had proposed in March 1965, says that ". . . where we fell down on the job was *not* in the area of being willing to go out and fight and die. . . . our failure was that we didn't step back once we were told we couldn't put the cordon in and say, 'Look, Mr. President, you can't get there from here.' " [184]

General Bruce Palmer, who, it will be recalled was the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (DCSOPS) of the Army in the spring of 1965, said in an interview, "I think that we underestimated the situation. I certainly did as DCSOPS. I didn't realize how far that country [South Vietnam] had gone the other way. The iceberg was submerged, the Viet Cong iceberg. And there were, you know, whole sections or provinces that had been Communist dominated for over a generation . . . How do you turn something like that around?" (ellipsis in original) "I think from the very beginning, we underestimated the tenacity of the North Vietnamese and their ability to put up and sacrifice the manpower they did."

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[183] Interview with Gen. William DePuy, 1979, Senior Officer Oral History Program, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa.

[184] CRS Interview with Gen. William DePuy, Aug. 1, 1988. See DePuy's article, "What We Might Have Done and Why We Didn't Do It.

Palmer, who says that nothing short of an invasion of North Vietnam could have caused the North Vietnamese to cease and desist, added that given the tenacity of the Communists, and the U.S. decision to limit the action to South Vietnam, "Any idea that we could fight a war of attrition successfully was a false one." According to Palmer, "It (the Vietnam War) was the strangest thing that we have ever gotten mixed up with. We didn't understand the Vietnamese or the situation, or what kind of a war it was. By the time we found out, it was too late. We were deeply committed." [185]

"That old 'can do' syndrome got us," General Palmer says, "You know, the Americans 'Can do' anything! And we overstepped or overstated ourselves."

Another factor in the U.S. decision to go to war was the assumption that, with U.S. help, the South Vietnamese could strengthen their capacity for self-government and self-defense, and ultimately that they could manage their own affairs, even though, as McNamara's report said, it might be necessary to keep a "fairly large number" of U.S. or international forces in the country after "winning" the war. Yet, this "essential premise" for the success of U.S. assistance—that external help could be effective only if there was adequate internal self-support—had been reformulated, as was mentioned earlier, to rationalize and justify increased U.S. involvement at a time of declining South Vietnamese self-government. In fact, by July 1965 there appears to have been very little confidence among U.S. policymakers in the ability of the South Vietnamese to govern themselves effectively.

One prominent American military commander with long experience in Vietnam, Gen. William B. Rosson, who was General Palmer's deputy in the spring of 1965, and, as noted, was opposed to the deployment of large-scale U.S. forces,[186] has suggested in retrospect that, given the political weakness of South Vietnam, it would have been better to have negotiated a neutral status for Vietnam in 1964-65, even if this had led to Communist control of the country: [187]

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[185] Interview with Gen. Bruce Palmer, Jr., 1975, Senior Officer Oral History Program, U.S. Army History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pa. Similar comments were made by Palmer in his book, *The 25-Year War,* pp. 175-176.

[186] See p. 172 above.

[187] William B. Rosson, (U.S. Army, Ret.), "Nine Steps Into the Maelstrom, Part II: A 'Limited Partnership' Escalates," *Army* (August 1984), pp. 42-55, at p. 55. General Rosson served in Vietnam with the U.S. Military Advisory Group in 1954, as chief of staff for Westmoreland in 1965-1966 and then as a field commander in Vietnam in 1967-68.

After the war ended, another former U.S. Army general who had served in Vietnam surveyed the attitudes of other Army general officers with Vietnam commands and found that over 50 percent of them thought that the U.S. should not have participated in combat in Vietnam. Douglas Kinnard, *The War Managers* (Hanover, N.H.: Univ. Press of New England, 1977), p. 154.

> . . . after over ten years of direct American advice and assistance, the South Vietnamese had demonstrated not only that they were incapable of winning, even with extensive outside support, but that they were incapable even of pulling themselves together to make the attempt.
>
> Could the United States reasonably have expected to do for the South Vietnamese what only they could do for themselves? If the answer to that question was "no"—and one looks in vain for a rational basis for "yes" or even "maybe"—then the proper course of action would have been to freeze the level of American advisors, support units and other assistance, and to work for a Geneva or other type of solution similar to the one produced by the 14-nation conference on Laos that had achieved agreement on neutrality for that country in July, 1962.
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> . . . the end result probably would have been loss of Indochina, but, as American authorities had acknowledged earlier, alternative security arrangements were available.

What would it take to win? It was assumed by civilian and military policymakers that within a year there would be 275,000-300,000 U.S. troops in Vietnam, and that they would probably be there for at least two and a half years.[188] Other estimates went as high as 500,000-750,000 for 3-5 years, and, indeed, this higher estimate seems to have been generally accepted by the military. (The President himself, in the meeting with Defense and military officials on July 22, referred to 600,000 troops.)

No long-range estimates of the probable cost in lives and money appear to have been made, although it was estimated by McNamara that in the short-run the death rate for Americans would probably increase to 500 a month, which it did in November 1965, and that the monetary cost for the next year (1966) would be on the order of $12 billion. It was $25 billion.[189]

McNamara also predicted that unless taxes were increased, the cost of the war and the resulting budget deficit would stimulate inflation. Taxes were not increased at that time; there was a growing budget deficit; and by 1966 inflation was becoming a serious problem. (Whereas McNamara had stated that the price index "ought not to go up more than a point or two" in 1966, it went up 6 points.)

What would be the reaction of the American public? There appears to have been very little attention given to this aspect of the decision by those responsible for developing plans for and estimating the effects of the use of U.S. forces, but the question was generally viewed as one on which the President was the authority, especially in the case of a seasoned politician like Lyndon Johnson.

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[188] In a later interview, William Bundy said that U.S. officials thought there might be as many as 250,000-300,000 troops, but did not think that there would be half a million. "It was only after we'd seen how effective the North Vietnamese could be in getting their forces down, and how much it took in the mathematics of guerrilla war to counter any guerrilla force, that we gradually found ourselves forced to go higher and higher. . . . Circumstances stretched it much further than anybody then foresaw, and obviously that was an error in our foresight." Charlton and Moncrieff, *Many Reasons Why*, p. 120. Part of Bundy's statement was incorrect. There were, as noted, various forecasts that the U.S. might need to commit at least 500,000 troops.

[189] See pt. IV of this study, forthcoming.

Consequently, when the President asked in the meeting on July 22 with Defense officials and the JCS whether the public would "go along" with having 600,000 men fighting 10,000 miles away at a cost of billions of dollars, the only reaction, according to the notes of the meeting, was a reference to the existence of public support demonstrated by the public opinion polls.

During the meetings, McGeorge Bundy said that "the country was in a mood to accept grim news." Some years later, he said that while the President and his advisers were aware of the danger of public opposition to the war, they were not prepared for the strength of the antiwar movement—". . . we simply hadn't estimated the kinds of new forces that were loose in the land in the middle '60s." [190]

Rusk took the position that because it was to be a limited war for limited objectives—a concept which the public needed to accept if the U.S. was going to be successful in deterring the Communists throughout the world—it could and should be fought in "cold blood" (in contrast to wars involving greater public involvement which were fought in "hot blood"). He is said to have opposed a Reserve call-up to avoid disrupting the lives of Reservists and heightening public awareness of and concern about the war. In a later interview, however, Rusk said that he made a "mistake in judgment" by over-estimating the "patience of the American people." [191]

Had the decision to go to war been given proper and adequate public approval? Some of those who had been involved in the policymaking process later began to question whether the way in which the decision was made had been consistent with the American tradition of public consent to the decision to go to war. One of these was Bill Moyers, who said in an article in 1968, "Viet Nam has proven that good intentions on the part of a nation's leaders will not substitute for the conscious involvement of the people in the decision to go to war." [192] Public opposition to the war in Vietnam, Moyers said, occurred because the public had not consented to its being fought: "It did not happen, in my opinion, primarily because some people thought the war immoral, and some thought it illegal and some thought it simply unwinnable at an acceptable cost. I think it happened because a majority of people believed the war undemocratic—waged in violation of the tradition of consent which is fundamental to the effective conduct of foreign policy in a free society. The war was begun, enlarged and is still being waged without a clear declaration of support by a majority of the American people." [193]

Moyers said that Johnson and his associates, presumably including Moyers himself, thought the war would be manageable and would not become a major conflict, and that for those reasons "they did not believe it would be wise to ask the public for a declaration of support for a war that did not at the moment seem inevitable." Moyers, who was the President's press secretary at the time the decision to send troops was made, added that for similar reasons there was excessive secrecy on the part of the government in its relations with the public.

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[190] CRS Interview with McGeorge Bundy, Jan. 8, 1979. Bundy's comments are quoted more fully on p. 148 above.

[191] Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War,* p. 443 and CRS Interview with Dean Rusk, Nov. 17, 1978.

[192] Bill Moyers, "One Thing We Learned," *Foreign Affairs* July 1968), pp. 657-664.

[193] Yet, in a personal, handwritten note to the President on Dec. 21, 1965, Moyers told Johnson that he had been "good for this country," and that his decisions on Vietnam, as well as other major problems, "will be right [for the country]." He added: "Helping you execute them, however small my part, is the most satisfying experience of my life, and my gratitude to you for permitting me a share, will be enduring." Johnson Library, Office of the President File.

In the Congress itself there was very little pressure, however, for a new authorization to replace or supplement the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. The leader of the Democratic Party in the Senate, Mike Mansfield, while opposing an escalation of the war, said that such a move could "set off a wave of criticism," and he and Senator Fulbright worked with the administration in bottling up the proposal for a new congressional resolution which had been made by Senators Javits and Randolph. As noted, Mansfield also told the President that he could not see the value of a new congressional resolution. The Senate, he said, could not direct the President in foreign relations, and previous resolutions had been passed "on faith" and out of loyalty and a feeling that Congress should support the President in a crisis. The Senate Republican leader, Everett Dirksen, also opposed a new resolution.

In the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, many of the members of which were quite concerned about increasing U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, there was some support for a new resolution. At one point such a move was proposed by the staff as one way of trying to exercise greater committee and congressional control over the decisions being made to deepen U.S. involvement. But, for the variety of reasons noted earlier, the committee did not seriously consider a new resolution, preferring instead to try to influence the situation in other ways.

Although there was little support for a new resolution, there was considerable support, especially in the Foreign Relations Committee, for further consultation with Congress by the President and his associates before the U.S. became involved in a larger war. The legislative history of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution suggested, as several administration officials pointed out to the President, that such consultation was expected by the Congress, and that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution had been passed with that understanding.

During the spring and summer of 1965, as noted, several members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee raised the question of consultation with administration witnesses, especially Secretary Rusk, who had told the committee during hearings on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution that there would be further consultation with the committee and with the leadership as the situation developed (although he was careful not to promise that the administration would consult with Congress prior to making decisions to deploy additional U.S. forces).[194] At no point during the period from January through July 1965, however, did the committee meet to discuss what might be done to influence the course of events, nor were there any hearings to inquire into and to question the course of U.S. policy.

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[194] For Rusk's exact language on this point in the hearing on the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964, see pt. II, pp. 310-311 of this study.

In a later interview, McGeorge Bundy was asked why the President decided not to go back to Congress. Bundy replied: "He didn't want to disrupt his legislative program. He really had pre-positioned the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in his own mind. The Congress wasn't asking him to come back. He must have thought . . . he had taken care of the . . . problem." [195]

As for the legality and constitutionality of the President's action, there appears to have been little if any discussion of this aspect during the meetings in late July prior to the announcement of the decision. Fortified by the position of his advisers that he had the authority to take such action without congressional approval, and the advice of Mansfield and other congressional leaders that he should not ask Congress to act again, the President apparently did not raise the issue, nor, with the exception of Javits, Randolph and Morse, did any Member of Congress, including the Democratic and Republican leaders whom Mansfield consulted privately on July 27 as well as those who attended the meeting of congressional leaders with the President that evening.[196]

There seems to have been almost no consideration in Congress or the Executive of a declaration of war, and latter-day suggestions that the war should have been declared do not adequately take account of the reasons why, apart from the possible effects of a congressional debate on the war and the legislative program which might result from such an action, that should have been the case.[197] In the Executive as well as among some Members of Congress it was assumed that the President did not need congressional authorization, either a resolution or a declaration of war, in order to deploy U.S. forces and to commit them to combat. Even those Members of Congress, like Javits, who argued that congressional authorization was desirable whether or not it was necessary, took the position that a declaration of war was outmoded. There were more "modern" ways of authorizing war and of giving notice to the opposing nation and to other nations that the U.S. considered itself to be a belligerent, while avoiding the adverse consequences of a declaration of war.[198]

There also seems to have been a concern on the part of some senior advisers that a declaration of war or some other form of more explicit congressional action could increase the risk of greater Russian and Chinese involvement in the war. According to W. W. Rostow, ". . . two people killed it [that is, a more explicit congressional authorization of a larger war or a declaration of war], Dean Rusk and Tommy [Llewellyn] Thompson," both of whom, especially after the experience of Chinese intervention in the Korean war, when U.S. forces approached the Manchurian border, were sensitive to the problem of either Chinese or Russian involvement in Vietnam.[199]

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[195] CRS Interview with McGeorge Bundy, Jan. 8, 1979.

[196] Alexander Bickel, noted professor of constitutional law at the Yale University Law School, later commented about the President's July 1965 decision: "If this decision was not for Congress under the Constitution, then no decision of any consequence in matters of peace and war is left to Congress." U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *War Powers Legislation*, Hearings, 92d Cong., 1st sess. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1972), p. 552. Yet at the time of the decision, neither Bickel nor any other prominent constitutional lawyer appears to have raised the issue.

[197] See, for example, Summers, *On Strategy*.

[198] See p. 79, fn. 97 above for the State Department paper, "Declaration of War and the Vietnam Crisis."

What would be the effect of American military intervention in Vietnam on efforts to contain communism in Asia as well as on U.S. relations with the U.S.S.R.? As regards Asia, the Johnson administration took the position that it was essential to guard against the threat to the region which was believed to be posed by the Communists, chiefly through the fomenting of revolution or "people's war" by the Chinese. ". . . the underlying fact," William Bundy said in a speech on May 27, 1965, "is that there cannot be a balance of power in Asia without us." [200]

One such revolution, in which the Chinese were playing a key role, was brewing at the time in Indonesia. According to William Bundy's assessment several years later, ". . . it seemed that an effective alignment between Peking and Djakarta had already come about, and that the PKI's [Communist party of Indonesia] chances of coming to power in a year or two were already much more than even." [201] Unforeseen at the time, however, was the counteraction that would occur in Indonesia in September 1965, when the army suppressed the Communists and established a strongly anti-Communist government.

U.S. policymakers were very sensitive to China's role in the Vietnam war, particularly to the possibility, which was mentioned several times by President Johnson during the last week of discussions on Westmoreland's request, that China might actually intervene with its armed forces as it had in Korea. Intelligence estimates were that China would probably intervene with its ground forces if the U.S. moved large forces of its own across the border between South Vietnam and North Vietnam and the North Vietnamese, unable to handle such an invasion, asked for Chinese help, or if the U.S. attacked air bases in China.[202] However, as noted, the SNIE of July 23 concluded that the President's decision to approve Westmoreland's request would not pose any particular problem as far as the Chinese were concerned. In fact, the Chinese would assume that the U.S. was only postponing—and worsening—its own defeat by taking actions which would prove insufficient to achieve U.S. goals.[203]

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[199] CRS Interview with W. W. Rostow, Oct. 6, 1978. On another occasion Rostow commented: "The reason why no further resolution was adopted in 1965 was not that President Johnson was trying to exploit the Southeast Asia Resolution to put troops in. Putting in troops was the last thing in the world he wanted to do anyhow. The decision not to go for a new resolution was due not to any disdain for the Senate, but to Secretary Rusk's statement that he did not know what formal military ties existed between the government in Hanoi and those in Peking and Moscow, and therefore, we would minimize the risk of a larger war if no further formal action was taken." William S. Livingston (ed.), *The Presidency and the Congress: A Shifting Balance of Power* (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1979), p. 213. William Bundy says, however, "So far as I can recall, American intelligence information never suggested the existence of such a formal undertaking [a military agreement between North Vietnam and the Russians and Chinese that would come into force if the U.S. declared war or took other formal action against North Vietnam]." Bundy, MS., ch. 30, p. 14. Bundy adds, however, that the result of such action by the U.S. would be ". . . to increase the leverage of Hanoi or Moscow and Peking for more direct military aid, to sharpen the fears of all three, and thus to reduce the chances of any tendency to compromise or abandonment of the use of force in South Vietnam."

[200] *Department of State Bulletin*, June 21, 1965, p. 1002, address by William Bundy before the Faculty Forum of the University of California at Berkeley, May 27, 1965.

[201] William Bundy MS., ch. 28, p. 12.

[202] Johnson Library, NSF Country File, Vietnam, CIA, Directorate of Intelligence, "The Sino-Vietnamese Effort to Limit American Actions in the Vietnam War," June 9, 1965.

The position of the Russians was, of course, another key factor in U.S. policymaking throughout the Vietnam war. Relations between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. had improved since Nikita Khrushchev was replaced by Aleksei Kosygin in October 1964, and the U.S. wanted to maintain and to strengthen that relationship. It was recognized that, because of their competition with the Chinese for leadership among Communist countries, and their desire to continue to be North Vietnam's principal Communist ally, the Russians would be compelled to increase their support for North Vietnam as the U.S. increased its support for the South.[204] (In May 1965, for example, surface to air missiles supplied by the Russians began to arrive in North Vietnam.) The hope, however, was that by maintaining good relations with the Russians—for one thing, by assuring them that it did not intend to threaten the continued existence of Communist control of North Vietnam—the U.S. could have some influence on the amount and kind of Russian aid to North Vietnam, as well as keeping open the possibility that the Russians would work with the U.S. in negotiating a political settlement as it had in the Geneva Conferences of 1954 and 1962.

Thus, following the series of decisions beginning in February 1965 to use American combat forces in Vietnam, the decision was made in July to go to war; to become, in the President's words, "the guardians at the gate." Yet, within a few months after U.S. forces began to assume the major responsibility for fighting the war, the President received a report from Secretary of Defense McNamara in November 1965 that, despite a good performance by U.S. forces, the Communists were increasing the scope and effectiveness of their military operations, ROLLING THUNDER was not producing expected results, and the pacification program had not improved. The U.S., McNamara said, could seek a compromise with the Communists, or it could increase its forces substantially—to 600,000 (the very figure the President had used in July) or more. But if the U.S. escalated the war, the odds were about even that after another year or more there would be "a military standoff at a much higher level, with pacification still stalled, and with any prospect of military success marred by the chances of an active Chinese intervention." [205]

The proverbial tunnel had become a labyrinth. And there was no end in sight, nor light.

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[203] Concern about China's reaction persisted, however, and on July 29, the White House asked the CIA for a report on the movement of Chinese troops into the northeastern part of North Vietnam. On July 30, the CIA replied that "The number [several words excised] involved and the rapidity of deployment may foreshadow increased Chinese Communist military involvement in the Vietnamese war." Same location, "Excerpt from the Combined Watch Report of the United States Intelligence Board" for the last week of July, sent on July 30, 1965 to Chester Cooper by Richard D. Kovar, Vietnam Affairs staff of the CIA. The report added, however, that all of these troop movements had been of logistical forces, and that "we have not detected the southward deployment of any Chinese Communist ground combat units."

[204] See in the same location the memorandum from the CIA's Directorate of Intelligence, "Post—Khrushchev Soviet Policy and the Vietnam Crisis," Apr. 3, 1965.

[205] *PP,* Gravel ed., vol. 4, p. 624.

APPENDIX I

SUMMARY OF TWELVE INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES, 1964-1965

On June 11, 1965, the CIA sent the White House a briefing paper on 12 National Intelligence Estimates and Special National Intelligence Estimates on Vietnam during the previous year which provides an excellent summary of the intelligence community's assessment of key issues facing policymakers as they considered whether or not to approve Westmoreland's "44 battalion" request and thereby to commit the U.S. to deploying large-scale ground forces to Vietnam:[1]

PART I

PRINCIPAL ISSUES IN THE SHORT TERM

I. The Communists think they are winning the war in South Vietnam, because:	
(a) It is a guerrilla war, of small-scale operations, in jungle and difficult terrain, where advanced weapons, air power, and large-unit formations are not of decisive importance;	The main judgments here are found most recently in SNIE 10-6-65 of 2 June 1965.
(b) it is a "war of national liberation"—a political and social struggle—the kind of struggle which they believe they will inevitably win;	Virtually all the Estimates stress Communist confidence in ultimate victory.
(c) they think the US does not understand how to fight such a war	
(d) they perceive the weaknesses of the South Vietnamese government;	
(e) they remember that they defeated the French;	
(f) finally, they think they are winning because in fact they *are* winning. (See General Westmoreland's recent cable.)	No NIE would declare that the Communists are winning the war, and none does.
II. *As long as the Communists think they are winning in South Vietnam, bombing of North Vietnam is unlikely to lead them to make conciliatory gestures.*	This proposition is most recently in SNIE 10-6-65, 2 June 1965, applying, however, only to bombing as in (a) and (b).

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[1] Johnson Library, NSF NSC History, Deployment of Forces, "NIEs and SNIEs on South Vietnam," TS#185866, June 11, 1965, prepared by the CIA's Office of National Estimates. (emphases in original)

Bombing of North Vietnam could be:

(a) limited to targets and areas approximately as at present;

Since February 1965, SNIEs have stated that this degree of bombing would not lead Hanoi to make conciliatory gestures.

(b) extended to airfields and SAM sites near Hanoi (and done with SAC aircraft);

SNIE10-6-65 (2 June 1965) says odds are against this leading Hanoi to conciliatory gestures. (Air Force dissents)

(c) extended (gradually) to North Vietnamese industrial and economic targets (not population centers as such);

SNIE 10-3/1-65 18 February, said (with State dissenting) that "if the US vigorously continued in its attacks and damaged some important economic or military assets the DRV . . . might decide to intensify the struggle, but . . . it seems to us somewhat more likely that they would decide to make some effort to secure a respite from US attack. . . ."

The 2 June SNIE, however, in effect though not specifically, reversed this judgment

(d) indiscriminate and complete

This has not been considered in any USIB [U.S. Intelligence Board] paper.

III. *As long as the Communists think they are winning in South Vietnam it is unlikely that Chinese Communists or Soviets will intervene with substantial military forces of their own in combat.*

The message of all recent SNIEs is in agreement with this proposition, for three main reasons:

1. Such intervention would not be necessary.
2. It would involve China and Russia in undesired risk of larger war with the U.S.
3. The North Vietnamese do not want a massive Chinese Communist presence in their country, at least not until their regime is facing severe defeat.

Note however that continuance of the flow of military supplies, equipment, and probably small numbers of technical and training personnel from China and the USSR to North Vietnam is virtually certain.

The chances of large-scale DRV invasion, of attacks on US aircraft carriers or bases, or of large-scale Chinese Communist military intervention call for further consideration, as follows:

CONTINGENCIES

I. *Large-scale, overt, DRV invasion of South Vietnam—on the "Korean" model.*

(a) Appears to us to be militarily imprudent. The only north-south road is the coast road, open to US air and naval bombardment.

Estimated in 10-6-65, 2 June, as unlikely in response to SAC bombings of North Vietnamese airfields and SAM sites, because of the risks to the DRV in such an invasion.

(b) *Caution.* This does not rule out accelerated and substantial infiltration of regular DRV forces along trails west of the coastal plain. This is occurring and probably will continue.

[paragraph excised]

All Estimates on the matter allow for the *possibility* of such an invasion. State consistently has judged it more likely, in certain contingencies, than have the other Agencies.

II. *Attacks on US carriers or on US air bases in South Vietnam.*	
Attacks on carriers are barely possible [two lines excised] possible but almost suicidal with IL-28s.	The possibility of such attacks is recognized in SNIEs, but (except for sabotage or sneak attacks on US airfields) they are deemed unlikely
Attacks on airfields in South Vietnam are possible but very dangerous with IL-28s from North Vietnam; are highly likely by sabotage teams.	
III. *Substantial Chinese Communist Military Intervention in Vietnam, in Combat, with*	
(a) Chinese Communist aircraft and pilots, based in North Vietnam.	Considered likely, in response to US bombing of North Vietnam, as far back as SNIE 10-3-65, 11 February 1965. Limited, however, by capability of North Vietnamese airfields, especially if these airfields were under US attack.
(b) Chinese Communist aircraft from bases in China	State considered this likely if US bombing extended to northern North Vietnam. All other agencies considered it unlikely. SNIE 10-3-65, 11 February. Also SNIE 10-6-65, 2 June.
(c) [three lines excised]	[four lines excised]
(d) Large numbers of Chinese Communist "volunteers"—in the Korean style	
Question: When would the Chinese Communists intervene militarily with ground forces in a substantial fashion (so as to change the character of the war)?	
(a) If the US/GVN were winning the war in South Vietnam? Probably *not.*	Not estimated by USIB
(b) If US air attacks began to damage the industrial and military sector of North Vietnam? Probably *not.*	Judged unlikely in SNIE 10-3-65, 11 February 1965 (with partial State dissent). this Estimate almost certainly still holds.
(c) [three lines excised]	[six lines excised]
(d) If US ground forces invaded North Vietnam in such strength as to control most of the country? Probably *yes;* almost certainly yes if US forces approached the Chinese frontier.	This is a judgment agreed in USIB a long time ago. There has been no occasion to repeat it in the past year.
Question: What about Soviet military intervention in combat	
Such intervention is judged to be extremely unlikely	SNIEs generally estimate Soviet reactions to be confined to propaganda, diplomatic maneuver, *and* supply of weapons and equipment to North Vietnam.
(a) Vietnam is too far away for the Soviets to support a useful military operation, especially in view of their unfriendly relations with Communist China	
(b) The Soviets wish to avoid a military confrontation with the US	

SOME POLITICAL FACTORS

I. The *Chinese Communists* are violent, unyielding, offering no avenue to settlement acceptable to the US. II. The *DRV* is almost, though not quite, as obdurate as the Chinese, and have apparently grown more so in recent weeks. III. The *Soviets* would probably like to get the problem settled, but they cannot force the DRV to a settlement, and there is no reason to suppose that they feel either the necessity or the desire to work towards a settlement on US terms. Their attitude has hardened in recent weeks. It is worth noting that Brezhnev and Kosygin have reversed Khrushchev's policy of disengagement from the Vietnam problem.	All this is in accord with SNIEs and NIEs.
IV. The Sino-Soviet quarrel is a factor of first importance. Much simplified: (a) The Chinese maintain their extreme revolutionary posture, expecting that a successful outcome in Vietnam (from their point of view) will enhance their position in the Communist world among underdeveloped nations. They wish to maximize their influence in North Vietnam, at Soviet expense (b) The Soviets cannot afford (even if they wish) to appear backward in their support of a "revolutionary struggle." But they are challenging Chinese influence in North Vietnam by supplying things (SAMs, IL-28s) which the Chinese cannot produce (c) The DRV appears eager to balance the overwhelming Chinese presence (owing to size and proximity) in their affairs with a growing Soviet involvement	Generally in accord with various USIB pronouncements.
V. The fragility of the governmental structure in South Vietnam is also an important factor in Communist calculations.	
VI. *Free World Attitudes* There is widespread disapproval of US action in Vietnam in the Free World generally, including the US itself	Not covered in NIEs.

We believe that the Communists rely heavily on this feeling to restrain the US from (1) anything approaching unrestricted bombing of North Vietnam and (2) widening the area and scope of the war	Emphasized in all SNIEs.
Communist diplomacy and propaganda is vigorous in encouraging the disapproval of US policy. It is an extremely important element in their general line of policy	Emphasized in all SNIEs.

FINAL NOTE

[Three and one-half lines excised.] The general proposition is that the Communists will try to restrain further expansion of military conflict—if only because they [are] doing well in conflict on the present scale.

APPENDIX II

SUMMARY OF THE JULY 14, 1965 REPORT OF THE JCS AD HOC STUDY GROUP, "INTENSIFICATION OF THE MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SOUTH VIETNAM, CONCEPT AND APPRAISAL"*

The "*major assumptions,*" within the bounds of which the U.S. could win if the assumptions held true, were summarized in the report as follows:[1]

> a. China and Russia will not intervene with armed forces, overtly or covertly, so long as there is no US/SVN land invasion of NVN.
>
> b. Restrictions on US/SVN use of force do not exceed the following:
>
> (1) No land invasion of NVN by US/SVN forces.
> (2) No use of nuclear weapons or chemical weapons.
> (3) No mass bombing of population per se.
>
> c. Once the concept envisaged in this study is approved by higher authority, operations within the scope of the proposed strategy will not be subject to restriction, delay, or planning uncertainties. This implies that the GVN will cooperate as necessary to this end.
>
> d. Operational coordination between US and SVN forces meets minimum acceptable professional standards of effectiveness.
>
> e. Neither the government nor the population of SVN turns against the US and demands withdrawal.

Following the summary of the major assumptions, the report then discussed each one in turn. With respect to major assumption (a)—the support of the Chinese—the report stated:[2]

> a. The Chinese Communists will almost certainly give the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese every encouragement to carry their insurgency program in South Vietnam to a successful conclusion. In efforts to prevent escalation of the Southeast Asian conflict, Peiping will try to restrict its assistance to a generous measure of political and material support.
>
> b. Should the VC receive serious setbacks in South Vietnam it is probable that the CHICOM's would try to keep the VC/DRV in the war with increased political and material assistance. Although the Chinese may make threatening troop movements along their frontiers, it is unlikely that they would employ these troops as reinforcements to the VC.

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[1] Goodpaster Report, p. iii.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. C-1.
*For the introductory portions of the report, herein called the Goodpaster Report (Gen. Andrew Goodpaster was Chairman of the Study Group), see pp. 360-362 above.

> c. In the event of a US/Allied ground force invasion of North Vietnam and if the North Vietnamese appeared to be unable to handle the situation thus created and requested Chinese assistance the Chinese would probably intervene with ground forces.
>
> d. The CHICOMs will react strongly to US air strikes against Chinese bases, but whether such attacks would generate a PLA [Chinese People's Liberation Army] ground attack, or simply result in counter air strikes and air defensive actions remains open to conjecture.

The report added that, "As our air strikes against North Vietnam continue, and especially if the DRV air defense capabilities prove inadequate to cope with the US strike program, it is likely that the Chinese would supply ground equipment and personnel to the DRV for air defense purposes and would also supply fighter aircraft units on request, providing they could be based in North Vietnam. They would not wish to use bases in China because of the risk of US retaliatory strikes against these bases." [3]

With respect to the support of the Russians, the report stated: [4]

> a. The Russians, to demonstrate their support of a fellow socialist nation, probably would feel obliged to continue to provide North Vietnam with military and economic assistance to enhance the DRV's capabilities to defend itself.
>
> b. Although the USSR would recognize that the need to maintain its position in the Communist World demanded it provide support for the DRV/VC cause, the Soviets probably would continue to moderate the extent of their commitment, to minimize the chances of a major US/Soviet confrontation.

The report added: "It is not believed however that this USSR help would include attempts to breach a blockade [of the port] of Haiphong; although it is probable that technical assistance would be provided." [5]

The discussion of the other major assumptions—(b) through (e)—was organized by four categories of restrictions: (1) "restrictions deriving from consideration of the CHICOM and Soviet hazard"; (2) "restrictions deriving from our relationship with Allies, neutrals, UN, etc."; (3) "restrictions deriving from SVN Relationships"; (4) "restrictions deriving from other sources." [6]

Under category (1), the report said, ". . . it is assumed that the sole restriction . . . is that US/SVN forces will not conduct a ground invasion of North Vietnam, nor attack Red China (unless Red Chinese air or ground forces were to intervene in NVN or SVN)."

Under category (2), relations with allies, neutrals, UN, etc., the report said that because there would be "almost universal worldwide disapproval," the "sole restriction in this category is that the US will not employ nuclear or chemical weapons; and will not conduct bombing attacks against population per se."

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[3] *Ibid.*, p. C-3.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. C-4.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. C- 5.

[6] See *ibid.*, pp. C-1 to C-12.

With respect to restrictions under category (3), relations with South Vietnam, the report said: "The attitude of the South Vietnamese government and people toward US involvement and the presence of sizeable US forces in SVN will depend upon the success of the US/RVN effort against the Viet Cong." If successful, public morale would improve and the government would be in a position to win popular support; if not, the public would turn against the government and the U.S. and there would be growing pressure to end the war.

Restrictions deriving from relationships with South Vietnam, the report added, could also affect military operations and the carrying out of a winning strategy. At the time the report was written, many military operations were conducted on a joint or coordinated basis by South Vietnamese and U.S. forces, but the South Vietnamese were in charge of their own forces. The resulting need for combined planning, as the report stated, led to "lessened security of information," and it was a "well-recognized hazard in Vietnam" that coordinated plans "are often communicated to the Viet Cong." "*It is therefore assumed,*" the report said, "that, within the bounds of the strategy and operations contemplated in this study, no restriction, delay or substantial degradation of operational security will be imposed as a result of SVN action."

In addition, there was the question of restrictions on operations resulting from reluctance of South Vietnamese military units to go on the offensive or to fight in a determined fashion. "*It is therefore assumed,*" the report stated, "that the SVN will be willing in principle to allocate forces to this role [offensive military operations], that these forces will fight effectively, and that the proportion of forces so allocated will be a matter determined on the basis of valid military considerations relating to the needs for pacification and territorial security, as well as the offensive campaign."

Under category (4)—other sources of restrictions—the report stated that there could be restrictions resulting from the way in which U.S. domestic political factors ("public opinion") and bureaucratic ("institutional") interests affected decisionmaking and operations:

> . . . Those of potential significance include delay or limitation of operations for reasons of domestic public opinion, desired scheduling for press coverage and timing in relation to governmental process, and the time consumed in consideration of added force movements which would bear, under the concept in this study, upon the degree of success in gaining and keeping a preponderance of force over the VC/DRV. Institutional interests reflected, for example, in interdepartmental clearance for the striking of specific targets included in the proposed air campaign could deny us the ability to "get the jump" on the enemy and keep him, rather than US, "behind the power curve." Also, force of habit will tend to continue in effect restrictions imposed in the past that could adversely affect these operations.

"*It is assumed* for this study," the report said, "that the operations envisaged take priority over restrictions of the foregoing type, and that these operations will be neither limited, delayed nor subjected to planning uncertainty because of considerations of this kind."

In other words, the Goodpaster group took the position that, in order to win the war, the normal U.S. political and bureaucratic processes—presumably including political/bureaucratic relations between and among the military services themselves—could not be allowed to interfere with military planning and operations.

Following the consideration of major assumptions, the report discussed the "principal lines" of proposed U.S. military action and of Communist counteraction: [7]

Proposed U.S.-South Vietnamese actions:

> a. Operations against North Vietnam. The object is, at a maximum, to bring about a DRV decision to stop the war or, failing this, at a minimum to cut down and limit sharply the support by the DRV of VC/DRV forces in SVN, at the same time being prepared to limit the introduction of additional DRV forces into SVN, if attempted, in order to permit containment of the insurgency in the south.
>
> b. Action against infiltration routes. The maximum objective is physically to halt the infiltration of men and supplies moving into SVN. At a minimum, curtailment of the flow should be such as, in conjunction with other major lines of action, to permit containment of the insurgency in SVN.
>
> c. Operations against VC/DRV main force battalions in SVN. At maximum the objective is to destroy these forces, their bases and VC strongholds, and open VC-held areas to pacification. The minimum is to permit a state of containment to be achieved and maintained, with limited US continued involvement and combat losses.
>
> d. Pacification, i.e., security of territory and population. The maximum objective is restoration of law and order, freedom of movement, and economic activity throughout the country, with no more than minor continuing violence. The minimum is containment within an acceptable area with sufficiently well- established law and order to start the country on an upward course.

Communist counteraction:

> a. In NVN, they will seek to cause our bombing to cease or to fail. They will employ active means, which may include AAA [anti-aircraft artillery], SAMs [surface-to-air missiles], MIGs [Russian-made fighters], and IL 28s [Russian-made Ilyushin light bombers] (the latter attacking the air bases supporting our attacks). In addition, they may try to overcome the effects of the bombing, e.g., through use of improvised expedients to by-pass destroyed bridges, coolie labor to man-pack supplies around choke-points and craters, and the like. More importantly, they may seek to restrict the intensity, the area, or the targets of our bombing effort by generating restrictive pressures on us through China, Russia, or neutral or allied countries.
>
> b. Along the infiltration routes, they may use methods such as the above. Also they may give emphasis to clandestine or highly dispersed movements both on land and sea. In addition, they provide security forces along the routes to locate and de-

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[7] *Ibid.*, pp. D-2 to D-4.

> stroy, if possible, SVN/US land elements which attempt physically to interdict the routes. Lastly, they employ large numbers of AAA weapons, and expend large quantities of AAA ammunition against photographic or attack aircraft within range.
>
> c. In SVN, the VC/DRV will seek to carry forward the takeover of the country. They may continue to attempt the destruction of sizable forces, even after US and third-country forces are in position, but it seems more likely they will employ attrition tactics, except where unusually favorable circumstances present themselves, and will rely on dispersion, movement and concealment to avoid giving US/SVN offensive forces a chance to fix them in position and destroy them. Undoubtedly, they will continue to try, through terror and violence, to prevent the extension of effective GVN government to areas of the countryside now VC-infested and will, in fact, try to extend their control. They will continue to disrupt transportation routes and exact a heavy toll on those attempting to carry on normal economic life or community activities. They will continue to exploit base areas and safe- havens left undisturbed, and take advantage of every failure of SVN forces to act energetically and aggressively to clear and secure zones for which they are responsible. In addition, they will seek by all means to foster hostility toward US and third- country forces on the part of the SVN people, and to cause friction between these forces and the RVNAF [Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces].

Within this general framework, the report then discussed specific objectives and plans of action as well as anticipated results for each of three major areas: (1) air operations against the North, (2) action against infiltration routes, (3) military operations in South Vietnam.[8]

1. Air Operations against the North. "It was hoped," the report said, "that aerial strikes in NVN would clearly demonstrate the will and determination of the US to carry the war directly to the true enemy while reducing to varying degrees of ineffectiveness military targets or targets essential to maintenance of the north-south LOC." However, "ROLLING THUNDER results through June," the report added, "show that this operation, as conducted to date, has not achieved the purpose intended. As the result of constraints on targeting, and weight of effort, after some 10,000 sorties the economic effects of the bombing have been minor in relation to total activity in NVN." From a military standpoint, there had also been limited results, and infiltration of personnel and supplies to the South "is still considerable." Moreover, while bombing of military installations had produced some disruptive effects, it had not "discernibly weakened the fiber of the DRV military structure." "In short," the report said, "the DRV still seems ready and able to endure air strikes at the current level."

Because of this failure of ROLLING THUNDER to achieve its objectives, it was necessary, the report said, to consider the "principal objectives for an air campaign aimed at the systematic reduction of the ability of the DRV to serve as the fountain head for aggression in the south, and to hurt him badly should he persist in efforts to support the south," namely:

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[8] *Ibid.*, pp. G-1 to G-30.

> (1) By the weight of the campaign as a demonstration of US/GVN resolve and capability, to bring about a DRV decision to stop the war or to negotiate for an armistice on terms favorable to the US/GVN.
>
> (2) By systematic target selection to reduce to relative ineffectiveness his ability to produce or process war supporting materiel and replacements for the VC/DRV forces operating in SVN.
>
> (3) Through armed route reconnaissance and related air interdiction measures, to prevent or sharply limit his introduction of additional DRV forces into SVN.

To achieve these objectives, the Goodpaster group proposed a "full scale air campaign against all selected military and industrial targets to effect their destruction as well as that of the DRV's will and capability to continue its support to the insurgents." Noting that 122 industrial and military targets had already been damaged or destroyed out of a total of 240 potential targets,[9] the report called for more than doubling the number of sorties per month, from 2,500 to 6,700, in order to destroy the remaining targets in three months. Attacks would be made on the following categories of target systems: air facilities; ground force installations; naval bases and facilities; lines of communication including railways, ports, (through bombing and mining), waterways and roadways; the electric power system; the machine tool industry (consisting of one plant); telecommunications facilities; petroleum storage.

Such attacks, the report said, could achieve the following results: [10]

> The stepped-up program of air strike should reduce in major degree the ability of the NVN to support the insurgency in SVN. The SAMs, MIGs and IL-28s can be effectively eliminated. By attacks against the planned target systems, particularly POL, and railroads, roads and waterways, together with mining of harbors, the DRV will be sharply limited in their ability to support VC/DRV forces in SVN at the intensified level of combat envisaged, and will in particular be limited in their capability to reinforce the VC with effective units of division size.

The report examined briefly whether, despite these attacks, the North Vietnamese could meet their logistical needs by importing more supplies from China and the U.S.S.R. This depended upon transportation facilities. Some sea cargo could still be imported at minor ports (unless the U.S. also mounted a naval blockade) using smaller boats (lighterage) to transfer the cargo from ships anchored offshore. An increased amount of material could also be imported overland from China by rail or road. Inland and coastal waterways could be used to transship materiel imported by sea or overland from China. By these various means, the report concluded, the North Vietnamese could maintain a logistical system for handling

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[9] These included many of those on the original 94-target list of May 1964, but others had been added.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. J-2 to J-3.

"substantial portions of the most urgent imports," but "The effect [of the attacks] upon the DRV economy, transport, and military logistics capabilities would be extensive, and the psychological impact of these operations should be felt by the DRV early in the program."

2. Action against infiltration routes. The objective of reducing infiltration could be achieved by: [11]

a. Reducing the amount available at the source, by a more concentrated effort in NVN, thus reducing the amount available for movement.

b. Reducing the amount entering SVN, or at least disrupting current operations as to timing, by air interdiction of present movement and/or establishment of some type of anti-infiltration barrier.

c. Raising the intensity of combat to that level where VC/DRV consumption rates of heavy items, principally ammunition, could not be sustained by present efforts, thus causing a loss in effectiveness or greater effort on his part.

An "aggressive" anti-infiltration effort along these lines "should result in some reduction of the number/amounts reaching SVN."

Air attacks on land infiltration routes, however, both on the routes themselves and on trucks and troops using the routes, would yield only limited results, the report said, unless infiltration of supplies and troops increased considerably. "As long as logistical requirements for VC/DRV support in SVN remain at present low levels (estimated at about 14 tons per day), no great reduction in quantities arriving is contemplated." Air attacks on troops (the report did not give any estimates on the number of troops being infiltrated) ". . . would have little inhibiting effect on such movements per se. Those measures envisioned in attack of way stations, rest areas, etc., appear to offer the best method of attacking such forces. Saturation bombing of known or suspected troop areas along routes into SVN should at least have a deleterious effect on morale."

Better control of infiltration along the routes into South Vietnam could be obtained by ground action in South Vietnam and Laos by U.S. forces, based on improved intelligence, rather than by air attacks. According to the report, "It is estimated that agreement of the Laotian Prime Minister could be obtained for such operations inside Laos." These actions would include the establishment of "blocking positions" along infiltration routes, and "aggressive patroling" from secure bases to detect new routes.

In addition to air and ground attacks on infiltration routes, the report said, another possibility would be to establish a barrier against infiltration, and "in the absence of some exotic means of establishing a land barrier to such infiltration [such as an electronic system], one measure would be to establish such a barrier utilizing ground/air forces with all possible supporting means." This might be possible, the report said, along the 175 miles of Route 9 running between Dong Ha in South Vietnam across Laos to Savannahket on the Thailand border. However, this would require two divisions of U.S. forces, and "It is considered more productive to use forces of similar size in offensive operations." [12]

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. H-1.

In summarizing the results of action against infiltration routes, the report stated: [13]

> In the short run, at present low levels of requirements of VC/DRV forces in SVN, only limited additional effectiveness is visualized over and above current results. In the long run, however, particularly when the intensity of combat operations is raised significantly, the combination of more effective efforts in all areas, along with offensive operations visualized, should decrease measurably the ability of VC/DRV forces to move personnel and supplies to SVN and their ability to withstand the pressure of our attacks against their forces in SVN.

3. Military Operations in South Vietnam. "The objective of military operations in South Vietnam is to demonstrate to the Viet Cong and to their DRV/CHICOM directors and supporters that the Viet Cong cannot win an insurgency campaign in South Vietnam. This will require the destruction as effective fighting forces of a large percentage of the main force [VC] battalions." [14] To achieve this objective, U.S. forces, with help from some South Vietnamese forces and from third country forces, would conduct offensive operations against Communist main force units, freeing the larger part of South Vietnam's armed forces for pacification programs by which to secure and extend the area controlled by the government.

The report noted that, ". . . finding and fixing Viet Cong units and locating Viet Cong bases will be one of the most difficult problems encountered" because of their tactic of "attacking only when conditions are favorable to them"; a condition which was expected to continue unless more regular North Vietnamese units were deployed in the South. However, because of the superiority of U.S. troops, together with South Vietnamese and third country troops which would fight with them, there was a "high prospect" that Communist main force units could be found, fixed and destroyed. The report estimated that the probability of success in offensive operations in South Vietnam was 70-75 percent. It emphasized again, however, that, "The greatest variable remains that of the ability to find and fix the enemy." [15]

One aspect of the problem of finding and fixing the enemy was the fact that in offensive battles in which South Vietnamese forces had pinned down the enemy, "usually in such cases the VC unit has managed to extricate itself under the cover of darkness." "Under the concept described here," the report declared, "such escape is expected to be the exception rather than the rule." "When VC units are located, forces will be concentrated by use of air mobility to assure the VC unit is destroyed."

After discussing actions in these three areas (against the North, against infiltration routes, and in the South), the report then presented the details of the force requirements for carrying out U.S. objectives.[16] In addition to the 77,999 U.S. troops which the report said had already been deployed or approved for deployment, it noted that Westmoreland and the JCS had recommended deploying another 92,797 by the end of 1965, for a total U.S. force of 176,000.[17] This total included 34 U.S. maneuver battalions (22 Army and 12 Marines), twice the number then deployed or approved for deployment. The addition of nine maneuver battalions from Korea and one from Australia and New Zealand would add 20,000 troops and raise the total to 200,000 U.S. and third force country troops and 44 maneuver battalions (the number requested by Westmoreland).

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[12] At this point in the report there is an excision of approximately 15 lines.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. H-8.

[14] *Ibid.*, p. I-1.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. I-14.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. T-1 ff.

It also noted that as of July 1965, South Vietnamese forces consisted of 261,102 regular troops, 261,345 more lightly armed paramilitary (106,500 Regional Forces, 151,000 Popular Forces, and 3,845 in the coastal forces engaged in anti-infiltration activities), and 24,700 "irregulars," for a total of 547,147.

By the end of 1965, the combination of U.S. and third country and South Vietnamese forces, not allowing for a planned expansion of South Vietnamese forces, would therefore be on the order of 750,000.

Communist forces in the South, on the other hand, consisted as of July 1965 of approximately 66,150 regular forces and 100,000-110,000 irregulars for a rounded total of 170,000.

Thus, on the basis of a straight comparison of the total number of troops on both sides (170,000 Communist forces, including irregulars; 760,0000 U.S., third country and South Vietnamese forces including all categories of South Vietnamese forces), the ratio after deployment of the additional U.S. and third country forces would be approximately 4.4 to 1, compared to 3.7 to 1 as of July 1965.

In its calculations of force requirements, the Goodpaster group made the following assumption:[18] "That a force ratio of four friendly units to one enemy unit is sufficient to fix and destroy the enemy." (There was no explanation in the report as to the basis for this assumption.) By "units," the group was referring to maneuver battalions, however, rather than to persons, and in calculating force ratio it compared the number of maneuver battalions on each side rather than the number of the troops. On this basis, it concluded that, "At the present time the force ratio of GVN battalions to known Viet Cong battalions is about 1.9 to 1. Assuming no further VC/PAVN buildup and on the assumption that a US or Allied battalion is the equivalent of two GVN battalions, that force ratio under planned deployments would be 3.3 to 1 by the end of 1965."[19]

Thus, even with the 44 battalions there would still be a shortfall in the 4 to 1 ratio needed "to take and keep the offensive throughout the country." To achieve a 4 to 1 ratio, Westmoreland had estimated, and the report confirmed, would require 7-35 additional battalions beyond the 44 battalions, "depending upon whether the US/SVN operation can be limited to a zone such as that of the I, II, and III Corps [the area to the north and west of Saigon], or must be extended to cover the delta region [IV Corps, south of Saigon] as well."[20] If U.S. forces were deployed only in the three areas, the force ratio in those areas, which was 2.7 to 1, would become 4.9 to 1 after deployment, and could even become 15 to 1, based on calculations of the number of days per month of intensive combat of which both sides were capable.

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[17] The report does not explain the discrepancy in these figures. The total of 77,999 and 92, 797 is 170,796, not 176,000.

[18] *Ibid.*, p. I-12.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. E-4. On pp. I-19-20, different ratios are given, apparently based on doubling the number of Communist battalions by including Communist irregulars in the calculation.

Thus, the Goodpaster report concluded, if the 44 battalions were deployed only to I, II and III Corps, allied forces in those areas, with their superior firepower and mobility, would have a 4-1 edge and could carry out their objective: "At times when the VC exerts his maximum capability our superiority is calculated to be 4 to 1, a circumstance which should assure us a high probability of destroying his units engaged."[21]

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[20] *Ibid.*, pp. ix, I-5. This is the way the 35 battalion shortfall was calculated (*ibid.*, pp. I-12-I-13): First, it was assumed that three U.S. and third country battalions would be needed to defend each of 15 bases throughout the country, a total of 45, plus 10 mobile battalions for each of the four Corps areas, a total of 40, making a combined total of 85 battalions to carry out the objective. From this was subtracted the number of U.S. and third country battalions to be deployed, but instead of using the figure of 44 the report added 6 battalions, raising to 50 the number to be deployed, for a net sum (shortfall) of 35. The extra six battalions were gained by using Marine "battalion equivalents," based on the fact that a Marine battalion is half again as large as an Army battalion. Thus, the 12 Marine battalions increased to 18 "Marine equivalents."

[21] *Ibid.*, p. I-24.

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